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**The Politics of Bestial Imagery in
Satire, 1789-1820**

Christopher Machell

PhD
2011

The Politics of Bestial Imagery in Satire, 1789-1820

Christopher Machell

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements of the University of
Northumbria at Newcastle for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract
The Politics of Bestial Imagery in Satire, 1789-1820

This thesis examines the widespread use of bestial imagery in satirical verse, prose and prints published between 1789 – 1820, through a study of Shelley, Spence, Gillray, Gifford, Robinson, Catherine Ann Dorset, Thelwall, Eaton, and Wolcot. The thesis asks why these writers and printers used animal metaphors so frequently, but moreover, what impact the use of this imagery had on the political landscape of satire in the period. Recent criticism has focussed on the historical and political contexts of Romantic-era satire, and this thesis follows that criticism with an historicist methodology, combining literary, historical and political approaches. Furthermore, the thesis analyses verse, prose and pictorial satires as contributing to the same political discourse and as doing so in closely related cultural arenas. This thesis claims originality on the basis that not only the use of animal imagery has a significant impact on how both contemporary and modern readers interpret its political meanings and contexts, but also that this is an argument that has not yet been posited by other critics. In addition, this thesis argues that through bestial metaphors, satirical writers and artists create a community wherein imagery is exchanged, developed and manipulated, and that this practice of cultural exchange significantly shapes those satires' historical contexts. Each of the thesis' five chapters focuses on a major satiric animal metaphor, whereby close readings of satires are offered alongside wider political and historical contexts. Consequently, this thesis provides a map of the most common satiric animal metaphors and their concomitant politics, and in doing so creates a new critical framework in which the growing interest in Romantic-period satire can be further developed.

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Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Name: Christopher David Machell

Signature:

Date:

Introduction

‘Splay-foot Madrigals’: Politics, Satire, and Bestial Imagery in the Romantic Period

The period 1789-1820 is significant as one characterised by political upheaval and unrest.¹ Edmund Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, published in 1790 in response to the 1789 French Revolution, inspired and influenced much of the satire published in this period. In turn, that satire framed the period’s concerns over the dissemination of radical and dissenting political literature. This thesis examines the widespread use of bestial imagery in satirical verse, prose and prints published between 1789 and 1820, through a study of Percy Shelley, James Gillray, William Gifford and other Romantic-era print and verse satirists. It posits that animal metaphors and imagery are one of the major tropes of the period’s satire. The central questions at the heart of this study ask why bestial imagery was so prolific in satire, and how that imagery influenced the politics of the satire in which it appeared. To answer these questions, the thesis is divided into five chapters, each examining the use of a specific animal metaphor, combining analyses of both verse and print satires. The historicist methodology that this thesis adopts allows for analyses of print, prose and verse satires, as the primary concern is how the period’s satire relates to and communicates with its historical and political contexts, regardless of its mode as visual or literary.

¹ The secondary material on the politics of the Romantic period is extensive. For example, see E.P., Thompson, *The Making of The English Working Class* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1965), Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries, and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), and Andrew McCann, *Cultural Politics in the 1790s: Literature, Radicalism and the Public Sphere* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1999), for accounts of the political climate of the period and its relationship with literary culture. See also Philip Harling, ‘The Law of Libel and the Limits of Repression, 1790-1832’, in *The Historical Journal*, 44:1 (2001), pp. 107-134 for a specific discussion of libel prosecutions in the Romantic period, and Kevin Gilmartin, ‘In the Theater of Counter-Revolution: Loyalist Association and Conservative Opinion in the 1790s’, in *The Journal of British Studies*, 41:3 (July 2002), pp. 291-328, for an examination of the prevalence of popular loyalist attitudes in the 1790s.

In recent years the subject of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century satire has experienced a growth in critical interest. Marcus Wood, Gary Dyer, Steven E. Jones, Vic Gatrell and John Strachan have all published studies in this area. The increase in attention to late-Georgian satire can be attributed to related historical works, such as Iain McCalman's *Radical Underworld*, whose focus on Thomas Evans and other Spencean revolutionaries of the period prompts further study into their methods of propagating their political aims.² Indeed, McCalman's chapter on the ultra-radical press devotes much time to the radical propaganda that arose from the Queen Caroline affair of 1820, suggesting possible further study of the satire that formed part of the propaganda.

This was responded to by Marcus Wood, whose 1994 *Radical Satire and Print Culture* examines radical figures including Thomas Spence and their methods of printing and propagating satire. Wood argues that the radical print satirists of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries exploited and parodied popular forms that were not necessarily associated with satire. For example, Spence devised coin tokens imprinted with satiric images, designed as both advertisements and as a novel method of radical propagation. Wood comments that these tokens 'combined folklore, proverbs, and literary quotation [and] developed the popular imagery of chapbooks and late eighteenth-century children's emblem books'.³ Moreover, Wood asserts that parody, and in particular satiric parody, was much more than 'merely a ridiculing outgrowth of serious literature':

² McCalman, op. cit.

³ Marcus Wood, *Radical Satire and Print Culture 1790-1822* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 69.

Parody was knocking away continually and uncontrollably at the notion that language reflected class and social position, that polite and literary forms of language could be set up above, and separate from, what Hone termed 'the literature of the multitude' [...] When commandeered by radical propagandists parody may become an act of linguistic acquisition and simultaneous subversion.⁴

This 'linguistic acquisition', Wood suggests, was an act of political revolution. Through parody, language is redistributed in much the same way that some radicals advocated the redistribution of land, and the distinctions between 'high' and 'low' language and literature become either blurred or entirely inverted.

Parody and satire occupy so much of the same thematic and even generic space that almost every major study of Romantic-era satire has analysed parody as satire's necessary and complementary partner. Parody is an important consideration for Wood, particularly because the visual mediums he analyses are so susceptible to instant, popularly recognisable parodic imitation. In his 1997 *British Satire and the Politics of Style 1789-1832*, Dyer acknowledges the importance of the period's visual satire, and states that Wood's *Radical Satire* is a 'distinguished example' of recent critical interest in that area.⁵

Stating that 'instead of a single, overarching argument, [his] book makes several interrelated claims', Dyer asserts that the main styles of satire (Juvenalian and Horatian) 'gathered new political connotations that forced reformist writers into a mode that was more intricately ironic than either'.⁶ This mode he terms 'Radical satire'.⁷ His chapter on 'the modes of satire' defines in detail the terms Neo-Juvenalian and Neo-Horatian, summarising satire 'in its Juvenalian forms

⁴ Wood, op. cit., pp. 12-13.

⁵ Gary Dyer, *British Satire and The Politics of Style 1789-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 2.

⁶ Ibid., p. 1.

⁷ Ibid. Wood also uses the term 'radical satire' in his study, but where Wood's 'radical' denotes the strictly ideological anti-Pittite, pro-reform stance of many of the period's satirists, writers and politicians, Dyer's 'Radical', whilst still referring to a political ideology, also refers to the formal and generic transformations of satire in the period. For definitions of Dyer's 'Radical satire' see his *British Satire*, pp. 3, 4, 41 and pp. 68-9.

[as being] dominated by conservative ideology, whereas in its more Horatian forms it tended toward a benign, noncommittal tolerance'.⁸ Although he notes that 'in recent decades [critics] have argued convincingly that in the late eighteenth century satirists became more polarized in their methods',⁹ Dyer asserts that the Neo-Juvenalian and Neo-Horatian satiric styles both tend to

legitimate the status quo [...] Although the subjects of the Horatian satires less often have clear political implications, quietism is intrinsic to their mode, so that while their conservatism lies on a different plane from that of *The Pursuits of Literature* or Hodgson's *Childe Harold's Monitor* (1818), they end up having a similar rhetorical effect.¹⁰

'Radical satire' is, like the Juvenalian style, 'insistently political',¹¹ but unlike both Juvenalian and Horatian modes, is actively disruptive to the 'status quo'. Crucially, Radical satire has a strong political voice, but uses the equivocality of Horatian satire to become, as Dyer terms it, 'multi-voiced'.¹²

Similar to Dyer's claim that no single book prior to his had attempted to characterise the plethora of satires published in the period, Steven E. Jones had already highlighted in 1994 that although Percy Shelley's 'individual satirical poems have received praise from readers as diverse as Bertolt Brecht and F.R. Leavis, there has never been a complete study of them as a group, *as satires*'.¹³ Jones challenges the traditional assumptions that Shelley 'was too serious – and that Romanticism as a whole was too sincere – to indulge in satire'.¹⁴ We are warned that

⁸ Dyer, op. cit., pp. 40-41.

⁹ Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 41

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., p. 68.

¹³ Steven E. Jones, *Shelley's Satire: Violence, Exhortation, and Authority* (Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1994), p. xi.

¹⁴ Ibid.

such assumptions determine the canon [...] and on this basis Shelley's satires, important documents of his effort actively to engage the social world, have been displaced, neglected, or discounted.¹⁵

Jones continues his dual analysis of canonical Romantic and satirical writing in his 2000 *Satire and Romanticism*, where he argues that although the natural irony of satire and the sincerity of Romantic writing are traditionally opposed, they 'mutually defined each other and were subtly interwoven during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries'.¹⁶ Jones highlights the fact that the Romantic canon is 'only one portion of the body of writing [...] produced during the period', and suggests that other 'un-Romantic' modes are equally as vital, as forms in their own right, but also in contrast to canonical Romanticism.¹⁷

Jones also edited the 2003 collection *The Satiric Eye: Forms of Satire in the Romantic Period*.¹⁸ On the subject of satiric bestial imagery, Donelle R. Ruwe contributes the chapter 'Satirical Birds and Natural Bugs', in which she examines a parody by Catherine Ann Dorset of William Roscoe's poem *The Butterfly's Ball*, entitled *The Peacock "At Home": A Sequel to the "Butterfly's Ball"*.¹⁹ In the same way that Dyer, Wood and Jones are intent on contextualising their source material, Ruwe aims to demonstrate that 'our celebration of Roscoe's escapist fantasy has blinded us to the very real political protests and social work found in other contemporaneous animal poems'.²⁰ In her analysis of Dorset's parody, Ruwe notes that 'Dorset took Roscoe's idea of

¹⁵ Jones, op. cit., p. xi.

¹⁶ Jones, *Satire and Romanticism*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), p. 1.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 3

¹⁸ Jones (ed.), *The Satiric Eye: Forms of Satire in the Romantic Period* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

¹⁹ Donelle R. Ruwe, 'Satirical Birds and Natural Bugs: J. Harris' Chapbooks and the Aesthetic of Children's Literature', in *ibid.*, pp. 115 – 137.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 119.

anthropomorphized creatures having a social event, fleshed it out, added a subtle layer of satire, and inspired thirty years of parodies and faithful imitations before disappearing from literary history'.²¹ Despite Ruwe's suggestion of a rich and unique catalogue of parodic satire in this period, her analysis of satires and parodies with anthropomorphized animals is the only one of its kind. She observes that

The Peacock "At Home" is [...] Quick-paced, full of petty jealousies, a mix of low and high diction and social cant, [...] exemplif[ying] Horatian satire [...] and] depict[ing] complicated social maneuverings [...] throughout the hosting of a high society social gathering – all made ludicrous by Dorset's clever linking of society types (the snob, the social climber) to types of birds.²²

Ruwe's final point is to argue that it 'should not be surprising that satire and children's literature were once connected'.²³ She states that

The double nature of satire, in which signals are to be interpreted by one reader as a criticism of another, can be effectively cross-written for the adult and child audience within the less violent, conversational modes of Horatian satire, but as soon as the politics in these chapbooks becomes [...] more Juvenalian, the element of cross-writing for the child falls away.²⁴

As with the 'Radical' mode as defined in Dyer's *British Satire*, and the parodies examined in Wood's *Radical Satire*, Ruwe suggests that children's literature that is politicised and thus satiricised becomes 'multi-voiced': it speaks to different audiences (the child and the adult) in different ways. Jones states that satire's

signals and cues are represented as embedded gestures [...] it functions through encoded or elusive gestures. This is not to say that every satire is a private joke,

²¹ Ruwe, op. cit., p. 121.

²² Ibid., p. 122.

²³ Ibid., p. 125.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 125-6.

only that all satire is relational, public poetry [...] Its typical gestures take place in the public arena, as ephemeral social transactions.²⁵

These ‘embedded gestures’ are the fabric of dialogic polyphony – their encoding ensures that certain audiences receive specific messages, and that, separate ‘social transactions’ of meaning may be conducted simultaneously.

That Romantic-era satire operates in ‘the public arena, as ephemeral social transactions’ is one of the most consistent arguments throughout criticism in the field. Moreover, that satire is multi-voiced, working as social dialogue and speaking to different groups in different ways is one of the most important and recurrent arguments to come out of studies on late-Georgian satire. In *Advertising and Satirical Culture in the Romantic Period*, John Strachan argues that the parodic satire of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and the period’s advertising culture are interrelated modes. Strachan demonstrates that many of the period’s satires are direct parodies of contemporary advertisements, and posits that ‘advertising and parody are linked dialogically in the late Georgian period’.²⁶ Satire, Strachan suggests, appropriates advertising form, parodying its language and appearance, but moreover, advertisements also use parody and ‘comic genres’ in their own language. Thus, each genre reacts to and is in dialogue with the other, contributing to a cultural discourse of parody, satiric appropriation and brand promotion.

Where Strachan correlates parodic and satiric techniques with the development of printing and advertising methods in the period, in *City of Laughter*, Vic Gatrell uses the popularity of print satires in the eighteenth century to depict eighteenth-century London as being rife with debauchery, bawdry and

²⁵ Jones, *Shelley’s Satire*, p. 7.

²⁶ John Strachan, *Advertising and Satirical Culture in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 5.

humour. Gatrell's depiction of an unfamiliar London mirrors Jones' efforts to represent non-Romantic late-Georgian writing as valid in relief to conventionally dominant Romantic modes. Gatrell claims in his study that an analysis of what made people laugh in the eighteenth century is just as important as examining 'histories of misery, pain and woe'.²⁷ His work does not focus

[...] on the polished wit upon which the politer people prided themselves, but on their malicious, sardonic and satirical humour [...] that was bawdy, knowing and ironic [... This] book suggests the fruitfulness of exploring the era's lowest manners and lowest forms of artistic production, rather than its highest.²⁸

Because 'the subjects that people think it appropriate to laugh at; what kinds of people laugh; how cruelly, mockingly, or sardonically they laugh [...] all vary with time, sex, class, place, and culture', Gatrell argues, 'studying laughter can take us to the heart of a generation's shifting attitudes, sensibilities and anxieties just as surely as the study of misery, politics, faith or art can'.²⁹ Where other studies of the period's satire focus on the darker aspects of the era's political history – satires on the Peterloo massacre, for example – Gatrell's work centres exclusively around prints and visual satires that depict London society at its most drunken, debauched and bawdy, leaving for the most part politics and other 'serious' topics out of the comedic equation. Even his chapter on 'Radical Satire and the Censors' centres exclusively on ridicule and farce, suggesting that all the spies and sedition laws at the Government's disposal ultimately could not stop the fun of humorous visual satire.

Although there has not yet been any study of satiric bestial imagery as a whole, some scholars have analysed the use of individual animal metaphors in

²⁷ Vic Gatrell, *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006), p. 5.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

satire. Most of these studies centre on the image of the swinish multitude. For example, Don Herzog offers an excellent overview of the use of swine imagery in *Poisoning the Minds of the Lower Orders*, in which he posits that ‘swinish multitude [...] emerges as one of the day’s cant phrases, right alongside the march of intellect’, and suggests that ‘Its reception and transformation are ironic ripostes to the argument Burke is making in introducing the image’.³⁰ In addition, on the radical appropriation of pig imagery, Olivia Smith argues that

Writers apparently wrote more freely as pigs because their political identity and their audience were explained by the metaphor. Colloquial language was appropriate for pigs speaking to pigs: that is, for authors pretending to be as their political opponents imagined them.³¹

The arguments in this thesis follow broadly similar lines to Smith, Herzog and others, but where this study differs from others is in its extended treatment of specific animal metaphors as part of a wider tradition of bestial imagery in the period’s satire. Where other studies have noted the use of one or two bestial metaphors that constitute the background in Romantic-period satire, this study aims to bring several major animal metaphors into the foreground of the period’s satire, and by doing so, suggest that bestial imagery is a defining feature of satire in the period. Moreover, by examining a range of different satiric bestial metaphors, this thesis ties together images that have, surprisingly, rarely or never been studied alongside one another. Satiric bestial metaphors work only in relation to each other: the chapter on John Bull imagery, for example, directly relates to and builds on the preceding chapter on the swinish multitude, drawing out the important relationships between the two images. Later, the examination

³⁰ Don Herzog, *Poisoning the Minds of the Lower Orders* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 505.

³¹ Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language: 1791-1819* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 87-8.

of reptile and insect metaphors follows the discussion of fashionable society and bird imagery in chapter three, while at the same time suggesting the relationship between political corruption and monster imagery in the final chapter. Moreover, both the third and fifth chapters begin their respective analyses by quoting Thomas Paine's use of bird and monster imagery in his *Rights of Man*. This is in itself a response to Burke's *Reflections*, which forms the basis of the discussion of pig imagery in chapter one, and demonstrates the interconnected nature of satiric bestial imagery in the period.

The first chapter of this study responds to studies such as Herzog's *Poisoning the Minds of the Lower Orders* and Smith's *The Politics of Language*, both of which suggest an opening in criticism for further analysis of swine imagery in satire. In chapter one, I examine the way radical satirists responded to and co-opted Edmund Burke's use of the phrase 'swinish multitude' as a descriptor of revolutionaries in Britain. As I discuss below, the image of the swinish multitude was one of the most politically incendiary phrases of the 1790s. Although the phrase is used most frequently in the 1790s, it is sustained throughout the early years of the eighteenth century by print satirists such as James Gillray, who lends swine imagery a political ambiguity that is not really present in the earlier radical verse satires. Chapter two follows the discussion of swine imagery in the period's satire by offering a parallel analysis of the use of John Bull in satire, and that figure's close relationship with the pig imagery of the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In chapter three, I examine how satirists use bird imagery to discuss the relationship between society and politics. Figures such as the Whig hostess Georgiana Cavendish became symbolic of the Whigs' dual position as both leaders of fashionable society and political opposition. Meanwhile, satirists such as Mary Robinson in her poem

Modern Manners, and Catherine Ann Dorset, in her *The Peacock "At Home"* attack fashionable society as a world characterised by petty vindictiveness, gossip and superficiality. Their use of bird metaphors highlight the political dimensions that shaped fashionable circles in the period. Elsewhere, satirists such as John Thelwall and Daniel Isaac Eaton use bird imagery for far more transparently political satires. However, as I argue in the chapter, their concerns are often similar, as they attack superficiality, and warn against outward appearance, link political and social pretensions together and highlight the similarities between political and social hierarchies.

The fourth chapter of this thesis follows the discussion of fashionable society by positing that at the heart of the literary dispute between Gifford and the Della Cruscans lies a political discourse on the conflict between tradition and hierarchy, and innovation and revolution. Alongside the renewed interest in Romantic-era satire, there has recently been a critical reappraisal of the Della Cruscans, a group of writers who were primarily known for writing verses to one another in the pages of magazines such as *The European Magazine* and *The World*. Their propensity to write overtly sincere and sentimental verses to one another made them easy targets for satirists such as William Gifford in his Juvenalian satire, *The Baviad*, and its sequel, *The Mæviad*. Jacqueline M. Labbe has noted the 'erotic violence'³² of Merry and his followers' verse, asserting that Cruscan 'sensual language fell foul of sensibility's celebration of virtue'.³³ Labbe argues that this amatory verse relies heavily upon sexualised body imagery, stating that 'Della Crusca, especially, clings to physical imagery, importing his

³² Jacqueline M. Labbe, *The Romantic Paradox: Love, Violence and the Uses of Romance, 1760-1830* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 2000), p. 39.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

idealised – romanticised – female body into his effusions to Anna Matilda’.³⁴

Labbe connects the sexualised body imagery of the Della Cruscans’ verse, and Gifford’s satiric motivations, positing that

Gifford’s horror arises as much from the lasting spectacle of men and women openly declaring love and physical desire as it does from aesthetic concerns: poetry itself was being violated, its classical purity put in the service of a pornographic emphasis on the passions.³⁵

In the Della Cruscans’ open declarations of love and admiration to one another, and in their amatory verses, Gifford saw a corruption of literature that had explicitly political dimensions. Gifford and the Della Cruscans are best understood in relation to one another, and so most studies to date have focussed on their interdependent relationship. However, no study has yet analysed the extensive use of insect and reptile imagery that Gifford and Mary Robinson, a key Della Cruscan, deploy in their attacks against each other.

Finally, the fifth chapter of this thesis discusses satiric monster imagery. Monsters are unique amongst bestial imagery, because unlike pigs, reptiles or birds, they have no essential, fixed form. However, I argue that they are crucial to understanding the use of animal imagery in the period’s satire, as their unfixed, undefined forms dictate that they necessarily always represent the ‘other’, and in a political climate where the ‘other’ could, and often did, represent political dissidents, foreign revolutionaries, and an emergent popular print culture fully equipped to spread sedition, the concept of monstrosity took on profoundly political dimensions. In many ways, the use of monster imagery in

³⁴ Labbe, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

Romantic-period satire summarises the fears and concerns raised by the other bestial metaphors that are discussed in this thesis.

In order to understand the period's satiric output, a firm grasp of contemporary political history and the figures that led it is crucial. The divide between the Tory and Whig parties was at the centre of the eighteenth century's political world. Leslie Mitchell has observed that it

was almost impossible to achieve Whiggery and only rarely was it thrust upon someone. To be born into certain families and to carry certain surnames marked an individual for life.³⁶

Moreover, Mitchell argues that Whiggery, perhaps more so than Toryism, went beyond political life – it was as much a social denomination as a political one. Power was gained through social networking, the strengthening of family ties through mutually beneficial marriages, and the mercenary use of 'men of talent', where their own was lacking. Mitchell characterises this as

great birth and great wealth [not guaranteeing] great ability [...] with the result that the Whig always had to co-opt talent [...] Accordingly, Whigs patronized talent in both meanings of the word, seeking it out, dining it and paying good wages [...] promising young men would find themselves with invitations to great Whig houses. The process of entrapment would then begin.³⁷

In contrast, the Tories had 'no comparable network' to compete with the Whigs' 'men of talent', and neither, as Mitchell argues, did other political groups, such as the radicals.³⁸ Whiggery was a social pursuit, and a London residence was crucial in order to participate in the metropolitan social scene. The West End of London, or 'the town', as it was known, was to a large extent built with Whig

³⁶ Leslie Mitchell *The Whig World* (London: Hambledon and London, 2005), p. 17.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 32.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 33.

finance, and was the centre of social Whiggery. It was a space in which to flaunt wealth, and to demonstrate the extent to which a family group were at the centre of society. Mitchell notes that West End society compared

the number of servants attending a family, [and] the scale of entertaining [...] Each of these attributes [...] rendered [a family] more or less acceptable as dinner companions or marriage partners.³⁹

The system of exclusive social hierarchies informed the Whig approach to politics, one which was often characterised by an absolute individualism. It is important to note that although the term ‘Whig’ is often used to refer to the political party, the Whigs did not have the unified sense of political ideology or identity that defines modern party politics. John Derry has asserted that

it is impossible to see the Whigs as a unified or coherent party [...] Whiggism had become so widely accepted that it was the fundamental ideology of several groups of politicians, each of which was in vigorous competition with the others [...] The Elder Pitt, Newcastle, Bedford, Grenville, Grafton, and Shelburne were all Whigs, but they were often intensely jealous of each other.⁴⁰

Indeed, it was this disunity in the Whig ‘party’ that was their defining feature in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Instead of a well-defined ideology, the Whigs were led by a vague sense of upholding the British constitution through gradual reform, natural development, and respectful opposition to overbearing monarchical influence in Parliament. The Whigs viewed themselves as the natural defenders of the constitution, parliamentary process, and gradual reform. Importantly, the Whigs were parliamentarians, not democrats: their defence of the constitution was not an advocacy of or a petition for suffrage.

³⁹ Mitchell, op. cit., p. 41.

⁴⁰ John W. Derry, *Politics in the Age of Fox, Pitt and Liverpool* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 3-4.

The politics of the Romantic period are characterised by the rivalries, contests and power struggles between individuals, particularly within the Whig party. Derry posits that all ‘the major political groupings were Whig’, and most of the major political battles of the period were fought within the Whig party.⁴¹ As a famously charismatic, charming and able public speaker, Charles James Fox was the major opposition Whig in the late eighteenth century. Fox was a passionate and eloquent politician, opposing religious oppression, supporting the independence of the American colonists and calling for economic reform.⁴² These factors combined to make him an enemy of George III, and consequently a friend to the Prince of Wales, whose amity with Fox was calculated to offend his father as much as for political reasons. Jeremy Black characterises their friendship as stemming from the Prince being opposed to the ‘frugality, virtue and duty of his father, preferring instead the latter’s opponent, Charles James Fox, who, unlike the Prince, had talent, but like him, lacked self-control’.⁴³ That lack was partly responsible for Fox’s downfall. In 1782, the former Prime Minister, Lord Rockingham died amidst an ongoing war with the American colonists, and disagreements amongst MPs as to the solution of the crisis. Fox advocated America’s independence, but faced serious opposition. This worsened with Rockingham’s death, as his major rival, Shelburne, had a clearer path to power, which led Fox, despite advice to the contrary, to resign from the government. Derry describes his resignation as ‘possibly the most grievous miscalculation of Fox’s career and it was fraught with momentous consequences’.⁴⁴

⁴¹Derry, op. cit., p. 43.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 20-21.

⁴³ Jeremy Black, *The Politics of Britain: 1688-1800* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 45.

⁴⁴ Derry, op. cit., p. 27.

The King's reluctance to allow Shelburne to accede to the leadership left Fox with some hope. Although Shelburne was appointed first minister, the fractured state of the government and of the Whigs in general meant a coalition would be necessary to secure a stable administration. Believing the divide between Fox and North to be too great, Shelburne allowed his new chancellor of the exchequer, Pitt, to approach Fox to propose a coalition. However Shelburne had overestimated the animosity between Fox and North, who agreed to share secretaryships under the leadership of the Duke of Portland.⁴⁵ The American issue was the final nail in the coffin for Shelburne. Despite accusations of political opportunism between Fox and North, and their past bitter disagreements over America, the pair defeated Shelburne over the draft peace terms, compelling Shelburne to resign.⁴⁶ However, Fox became characteristically cocksure in his position. He was

over-confident, complacent about his majority in the Commons, and contemptuous of the likelihood that George III would be able to do anything to prevent the ministers ruling as they wished.⁴⁷

Furthermore, the debate of the twenty-one year-old Prince of Wales' debts and income angered the King, and he very quickly started to look for ways to destroy the coalition. The India Bill was the perfect reason. As Derry observes, by 'introducing [the Bill], Fox initiated a sequence of events which proved to be the undoing of the ministry'.⁴⁸ The Bill was a way of reforming British rule in India, and would establish a board of seven commissioners, its job being to keep a watchful eye on the East India Company. However, the four-year term of the

⁴⁵ Derry, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

board was criticised as simply guaranteeing that Fox and his supporters were effectively granted ‘four years of undisturbed access to East Indian patronage’.⁴⁹ These criticisms damaged the popularity and credibility of the coalition, and with indications that a general election would not go well for them, the King lined up Pitt as his new minister, on the condition that the King publicly turned his back on Fox and North before dismissing them. He did so by sending a letter round the House of Lords warning that anyone who did not oppose the India Bill would be seen as an enemy to the King. The tactic worked, and the subsequent minority that the coalition fell into resulted in the King’s dismissal of Fox and North. Fox’s mixture of hedonism, charisma and political astuteness, mixed with hot-headedness, created a fascinating persona. Mitchell has commented that following his death in 1806, Fox

almost achieved iconic status. His names were showered on Whig babies at christenings throughout the first half of the nineteenth century [...] On assuming his duties as Prince Regent in 1811, the Prince of Wales delayed his first ministerial audience for an hour, so that he and all his ministers could contemplate [a] bust [of Fox].⁵⁰

Mitchell attributes this anecdote to the ‘cult of Fox’, which was indicative of the way that ‘Whigs turned history into profitable myth, and the ease with which they could beatify their heroes’.⁵¹ Furthermore, Mitchell suggests that this stems from the Whig propensity for ‘ancestor-worship’, and the Whig obsession with lineage, aristocratic duty, and filial and social networks of power. However, Fox’s own personality cannot be discounted in the estimation of his status as ‘iconic’, or as the figurehead of a ‘cult’. Indeed, he was perhaps the most

⁴⁹ Derry, op. cit., p. 30.

⁵⁰ Mitchell, op. cit., pp. 152-153.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 152.

charismatic political figure of his time, second only to his friend the Prince of Wales for being depicted satirically as an overweight hedonist.

That depiction is in stark contrast to satiric portrayal of Fox's arch-rival, Pitt the Younger. Throughout the satire of the 1790s and the first decade of the 1800s, Pitt is depicted as gaunt and grotesquely skinny. He often displays an unsettling combination of youth and bodily decay. Perhaps it comes as little surprise, then, that if Fox allied himself to the hedonistic and corpulent Prince of Wales, the slim, methodical Pitt would find a natural ally in the frugal George III. Pitt became the leader of the King's Government in 1783, at the remarkable age of twenty-four. As with Fox, his political stock was good. His father, Pitt the Elder, has been described by Michael Duffy as 'the most dazzling political comet of the mid-eighteenth century'.⁵² Like Fox after his ministerial dismissal, Pitt the Younger entered the House of Commons as an opposition MP, but consciously did not associate himself with any particular opposition group.

As the office of Prime Minister was not properly defined at this point, Pitt's desire to serve as Premier forced him to fend off calls for him to serve in a joint ministry, and the fragility of the early days of Pitt's primacy is illustrated in his being outvoted on the issue of Parliamentary reform in 1784.⁵³ Furthermore, Pitt had to face the obstacle of Lord Chancellor Thurlow, who 'enjoyed a privileged place in the confidence of the King'.⁵⁴ Worse, in several ways Thurlow's personality matched that of the King more closely than did Pitt's: Thurlow's views on reform were as negative as the King's, and he was slow to make decisions on matters of business.⁵⁵ Duffy points out that after 'a period of

⁵² Michael Duffy, *Pitt the Younger* (Essex: Pearson Education, 2000), p. 1.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

uneasy co-operation [between Pitt and Thurlow] relations deteriorated into hostility from 1788'.⁵⁶ After this, 'Pitt could expect little support from the rest of the Cabinet against the powerful and obstructive Chancellor'.⁵⁷

The King opposed Pitt on matters of Parliamentary reform, but the two still managed to agree that George would not openly interfere in the running of the Government, though he still retained his right to appoint ministers. Instead, Pitt's policies were restricted by Thurlow's ministerial position, who was effectively acting as the monarch's inside man. The Regency Crisis in 1788 exacerbated the animosity between Pitt and Thurlow, and it was uncertain as to how far Thurlow would exploit his access to the Prince of Wales to secure his position. Fortunately for Pitt, Thurlow publicly declared his loyalty to the King. In 1789 George recovered from his first bout of porphyria, but by 1790, the Lord Chancellor was threatening to cease all co-operation in the House of Lords over disagreements on a Scottish patronage issue.⁵⁸ The positive outcome for Pitt in the general election of 1790 did strengthen his position, but this in turn brought matters between the men to a head. Pitt's friend and ally William Grenville saw that the way to beat Thurlow was to bring in opposition Whigs to the ministry, but the opposition then insisted that a condition of this union would be that Pitt must step down from his leadership of the Treasury.⁵⁹

Pitt's only recourse, therefore, was to build his own network of cronies, whose expert advice and support could be relied upon. These included Henry Dundas, William Grenville and Charles Jenkinson, although the latter of these Pitt would rather have done without.⁶⁰ However, Jenkinson's expertise in trade

⁵⁶ Duffy, op. cit.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 51.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 57-58.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 59.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 54.

and finance soon proved him to be indispensable, making, as Duffy asserts, ‘vital contributions to Pitt’s Irish Commercial Propositions and to commercial negotiations with France and other countries’.⁶¹ In 1791 Jenkinson entered the cabinet, and in 1796 was given the title Earl of Liverpool. Derry asserts that for ‘half a century British politics were dominated’ by Pitt and Liverpool, and that where ‘Pitt established a particular mode of political behaviour, Liverpool reactivated it’.⁶² Despite Pitt’s reservations, then, Liverpool’s contributions to Pitt’s ministry were both invaluable and highly influential.

Henry Dundas was another figure drafted in during the weak days of Pitt’s ministry, in order to strengthen and secure Pitt’s own premiership. Along with Pitt and Grenville, Dundas formed one arm of a trio that led the direction of government policy.⁶³ Like Jenkinson, Dundas was experienced in business, and after being admitted into Pitt’s inner circle, quickly became the head of the India Board of Control. In addition, if ‘there was any dirty or unpleasant job to be done, Dundas was not afraid to take it on: he was Pitt’s political ‘fixer’’.⁶⁴ Unlike Jenkinson, Dundas was personally suited to Pitt: Duffy describes both men as ‘hard drinkers, both enjoyed a love of the countryside and they frequently indulged each of these at Dundas’ Wimbledon villa’.⁶⁵ Later, in the paranoid, Jacobin-fearing years of the 1790s, Dundas supported Pitt in his stance against Burke’s affirmation that ‘the ideology of Jacobinism was even more menacing than the military power of the French republic’.⁶⁶

In satire, the ‘ideology of Jacobinism’ is represented by anti-Jacobin satirists overwhelmingly as monstrous. Elsewhere, Gillray draws comparisons

⁶¹ Duffy, op. cit.

⁶² Derry, op. cit., p. viii.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 38.

⁶⁴ Duffy, op. cit., p. 53.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 54.

⁶⁶ Derry, op. cit., p. 67.

between the Whigs and the swinish multitude, and the Tory satirist Gifford caricatures his targets as poisonous toads and reptiles. Later, Shelley uses the iconography of John Bull and the swinish multitude to link the Caroline Affair to the revolutionary politics of the 1790s. The satire of the Romantic period is linked intrinsically to politics, and no more so when satirists employ animal imagery in their work. Throughout the satire of the period, animal imagery is used not simply to respond to its political contexts, but also to influence and direct political discourse. The question at the heart of this thesis is why satirists consistently use the same metaphors and imagery, and for specific purposes. Over the following five chapters, I hope to answer that question by positing the argument that animal imagery is crucial to the way that political discourse is framed in the period's satire. This thesis' claim to originality lies in the proposition that not only has the argument that animal imagery impacts on the politics of satire has not yet been offered, but more importantly, satirists co-opt, develop and manipulate bestial imagery in a practice of cultural exchange that significantly shapes political discourse in the period. It differs from previous work in the field by identifying not only the prevalence of bestial imagery in satire, but also the significance of that imagery as part of a system of political discourse. Other studies have analysed the relationship between Romantic-period satire and the era's politics, but this study is the first to analyse one of the major tropes of the period's satire, namely, animal metaphors. This thesis provides a map of the most common satiric animal metaphors and their concomitant politics, but more importantly, demonstrates that those metaphors form a coherent system of imagery whereby satiric-political discourse is framed and disseminated. In doing so, this study creates a new critical framework within which the growing interest in Romantic-period satire can be further developed.

Chapter One

‘A Salmagundy for Swine’: Satirical Responses to Burke’s Swinish Multitude

In 1790 Edmund Burke published his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, a tract that both criticised the overthrowing of the French monarchy, and warned against similar uprisings in England. Out of this text arose one of the most incendiary phrases of the revolutionary period, and one that was used throughout the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Burke expressed a fear that ‘along with its natural protectors and guardians, learning will be cast into the mire, and trodden down under the hoofs of a swinish multitude’.¹ As will be seen, the term ‘swinish multitude’ was subsequently met with a combination of anger and ridicule from radical figures such as Thomas Spence, Daniel Isaac Eaton and Percy Bysshe Shelley. Burke used the image of the swinish multitude to caricature the French Revolution’s supporters as an animalistic and dangerous mob. The metaphor was subsequently received by radicals and reformists as symptomatic of an establishment opposed to reform and wilfully deaf to the voice of the working classes. Herzog comments that after the publication of *Reflections*,

too many popular readers stumbled across *a swinish multitude*. They didn’t relish the language, which they took as insolent and insulting. Or, better, some of them did relish the language, which they must have exulted over as an invaluable gift. As radicals saw it, Burke had blundered. He had exposed the nub of the contempt that the reigning establishment had for the people of England.²

¹ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. J.C.D. Clark (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 242.

² Herzog, *op. cit.*, p. 512.

Burke's metaphor was an image on to which radical satirists could latch and in doing so attack the political and social attitudes espoused in *Reflections*. Radical periodicals such as Thomas Spence's *Pig's Meat* or Daniel Isaac Eaton's *Hog's Wash, or Politics for the People* ridicule Burke's phrase by alluding to it in their titles. Later, Percy Shelley's burlesque of the 1820 Queen Caroline Affair, *Oedipus Tyrannus, or Swellfoot the Tyrant*, performs a similar function by characterising its oppressed plebeian characters as a mass of pigs. The first part of the chapter focuses on Burke's use of the image in his *Reflections*, considering the potential interpretations of the phrase prior to it being adopted by satirists. The second section analyses the adoption of the swinish multitude by satirists in the 1790s, specifically Spence, Eaton, and the print satirist James Gillray. Where Spence and Eaton used the image for radical purposes, Gillray's use of pig metaphors is not as easy to place on the political spectrum, and is an example of swine imagery being used in a politically ambiguous way. Finally, the third section of the chapter examines Shelley's *Swellfoot the Tyrant*, and discusses how the poet built on the satirical uses of the image by figures like Spence, while tying it to an historical event apparently separate from the issues of the 1790s.

1.1 The reception of Burke by radical satirists

J.C.D. Clark reminds us that to understand Burke as anti-reform would be inaccurate and anachronistic. Clark argues that Burke's feelings on the French Revolution were not informed by a love of arbitrary monarchy, but by a belief in a civic contract founded on 'law, tradition, precedent, prescription and all that was venerable'.³ Furthermore, the

³ Clark, 'Introduction', in Burke, op. cit., p. 38.

new element in Burke's thought was not praise of the monarchy (on which he was still cool), nor praise of the nobility [...] Burke had sympathised with every major act of political resistance he had encountered in his political career until those in the United Provinces in 1787 and France in 1789.⁴

Clark attempts to reconcile Burke's apparent inconsistency of principles between his support of earlier political resistance and his denunciation of the events in France, arguing, for example, that Burke did not

regard 1789 as the logical extension of 1776 [...] he did not regard 1789 as a step forward into a new world [...] He regarded the French Revolution as a step back into a world violent, irrational and fanatical in a way that recalled the sixteenth-century wars of religion.⁵

Burke viewed the American Revolution as a progression from foreign tyranny towards independence and self-governance. However, the French Revolution, as Burke saw it, was a regression for both France and Europe from tradition and precedent into anarchy. Although Burke was employed as a Whig spokesman by Rockingham and supported the American Revolution, his use of the pig metaphor was received by radicals and reformists as an affirmation of his support for oppressive governmental policy.

An important aspect of the radical reception of Burke as an advocate of oppressive government is that his 'swinish multitude' is consistently misquoted as 'the swinish multitude', where Burke himself uses the indefinite article. Herzog has also noted this:

From his day to ours, Burke has been misquoted routinely. Ever the meticulous critic, Hazlitt noticed the mistake. Some of Burke's apologists plunked down their chips on the political significance of that indefinite article [...] William

⁴ Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

Windham, Burke's parliamentary acolyte, bitterly assailed the nefarious subversion of the master's words.⁶

The mistake is small but not insignificant: 'the swinish multitude' points to a mob already in existence. In contrast, 'a swinish multitude', suggests only a group of people that might potentially undermine not only the stability of the state but also of the wider working classes who are, by and large, civilised members of society and distinct from a riotous multitude. However, Herzog is not convinced that this discrepancy means that 'Burke harboured no sweepingly general contempt for the lower orders', or that 'He only ventured a narrow reflection on the contingent actions of one particular mob'.⁷ Rather, he argues that

It would be difficult to name the particular mob Burke might have had in mind in this passage. Besides, the *Reflections* are forever poised on the edge of allegory, each idiosyncratic episode of the distressing history he steels himself to explore coruscating with universal political significance [...] Burke shrinks with horror from the revolutionaries' decision to commemorate Bastille Day by exposing Louis and Marie Antoinette "to the derision of an unthinking and unprincipled multitude": a concrete mob, but is Burke privy to concrete knowledge of its character? or [sic] is he making a reflex judgement, that is no judgment at all, about the character of the multitude?⁸

The difference for Herzog, then, is not enough to acquit Burke of the charges of effectively betraying and libelling the agitated working classes. Herzog suggests that it is only Burke's apologists who make too much of the difference between the indefinite and definite articles in Burke's phrase, and that what the commentators suggest by misquoting the phrase is already evident in the rest of Burke's tract. Similarly, Roland Bartel notes that

⁶ Herzog, *op. cit.*, pp. 508-509.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 509.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Burke insulted the lower classes at the time when they were hypersensitive about their sufferings and their rights. By the last decade of the eighteenth century the political and social reformers had made enough progress to encourage the lower classes to expect a steady improvement in their condition [...] Small wonder that the people [...] were infuriated by Burke's epithet [...] the people were not about to leave unchallenged any suggestion that they were swine.⁹

Bartel argues convincingly 'that the explosion caused by Burke's phrase can be explained at least in part by the spirit of the times', stating that Milton had used similar terminology to describe the people in *Paradise Regained*, as had Alexander Pope when he described the masses as 'a many-headed Beast' in *The First Epistle of the First Book of Horace*,¹⁰ but received none of the backlash that Burke did.¹¹ The misquoting of Burke's image of 'a swinish multitude' into 'the swinish multitude' alters its meaning from the representation of a hypothetical, small number of inexperienced revolutionaries, into a derogatory term aimed scattershot at the working classes, and this is an important distinction. However, Bartel and Herzog are right to point out Burke's insensitivity to the plight of the working classes in the 1790s, and that the phrase, even in its original form, is still dismissive of the attempt of British radicals to forge a legitimate political voice, caricaturing British sympathisers of French revolutionary ideals as an unruly mob not intellectually equipped to deal with their own governance.

1.2 *Pig's Meat, Politics for the People, and the radical appropriation of swine imagery*

From 1793-1795 the land reform advocate and radical satirist Thomas Spence published a periodical entitled *One Pennyworth of Pig's Meat; or, Lessons for*

⁹ Roland Bartel, 'Shelley and Burke's Swinish Multitude', in *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 18 (1969), pp. 4-8, here pp. 6-7.

¹⁰ Alexander Pope, *The First Epistle of the First Book of Horace, to Lord Bolingbroke*, in *Poetical Works* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 354, l. 121.

¹¹ Bartel, op. cit., p. 7.

the Swinish Multitude; the title was an obvious allusion to Burke's phrase, and was the first to satirise the image. The range of articles in *Pig's Meat* is limited in scope only by the intention of promoting 'among the Labouring Part of Mankind proper ideas of their Situation, of their Importance, and of their Rights'.¹² Reinforcing this, the periodical includes excerpts from political and philosophical texts such as Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* and Paine's *Rights of Man*, moralistic fabular verse such as 'The Bee and the Spider', taken from *Dodsley's Fables*, and a 'Description of England', framed as the letter 'of a Persian in England to his friend at Ispahan'.¹³ Nicholas Mason has commented that while 'most pages in *Pig's Meat* were devoted to classic texts on tyranny, liberty, and equality, occasionally Spence slipped in contemporary polemics and satires by himself and other London radicals'.¹⁴ One such satirical poem is Spence's own 'Burke's Address to the "Swinish Multitude"', which Mason notes was originally 'distributed as a broadside' before its publication in *Pig's Meat* in 1793.¹⁵ In the poem, Spence directly attacks what he perceives as the pro-monarchy rhetoric of *Reflections*, beginning by making his anti-revolutionary narrator ask

Do you think that a KING is no more than a Man?
Ye Brutish, ye swinish, irrational Clan?'¹⁶

The narrator then answers his own question with,

I swear by his Office, his Right is divine,
To flog you, and feed you, and treat you like Swine!

¹² Frontispiece to the collected *Pig's Meat, or Lessons for the Swinish Multitude*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (London: Thomas Spence, 1793).

¹³ *Pig's Meat*, p. 42.

¹⁴ Nicholas Mason (ed.), *British Satire 1785-1840, Volume 1, Collected Satires I: Shorter Satires* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003), p. 37, hereafter referred to as *BS vol. 1*.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Thomas Spence, 'Burke's Address to the "Swinish Multitude"' in *ibid.*, p. 39, ll. 11-12.

Get you down!¹⁷

This rhetorical question and answer motif reduces Burke's own rhetoric and seeming rationality into a mere barking of orders at the reader. This is exacerbated with each stanza's repetition of 'Get you down!', where Spence drops Burke's veil of reason to reveal the suppression of a multitude who question monarchical authority.

Including the title, the words 'swine', 'swinish', 'ham,' 'pork', 'pig' and 'snout' are used a total of thirteen times in just sixty lines, effectively becoming a mockery of Burke's phrase. Spence juxtaposes the narrator's accusation of the 'multitude' as an incoherent, 'grunting', 'grumbling' mass, with the articulate questions that his opponents actually ask.¹⁸ There is nothing 'irrational',¹⁹ for example, when the 'swinish [...] clan' ask 'what use' the establishment 'make of [their] money'.²⁰ Despite himself, even the narrator admits that the 'The *State* [...] has grown fat upon SWINE',²¹ and that it 'is *defective* and also *corrupt*'.²² Yet at the same time he denies that the swine 'Have a Right to find fault with the *Cooks*'.²³ The narrator asserts this authority with his phrase 'get you down', and with vague and unsubstantiated references to the 'first Law of Nature'.²⁴ The narrator's inability to adequately justify the oppression of the multitude mocks Burke's advocacy of hereditary monarchy in *Reflections*:

At some time or other, to be sure, all the beginners of dynasties were chosen by those who called them to govern. There is ground enough for the opinion that all the kingdoms of Europe were, at a remote period, elective [...] but in whatever

¹⁷ Spence, op. cit., ll. 13-15.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp 39-40, ll. 3 and 36, respectively.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 39, l. 12.

²⁰ Ibid., ll. 13 and 31, respectively.

²¹ Ibid., l. 26.

²² Ibid., l. 17.

²³ Ibid., ll. 28-29.

²⁴ Ibid., l. 32.

manner the ruling dynasties of England or France may have begun, the King of Great Britain is at this day king by a fixed rule of succession, according to the laws of his country.²⁵

The narrator's brutish, untenable rhetoric highlights, as Spence sees it, the nonsensical nature of Burke's passage – the King's legitimacy may well be fixed by 'a rule of succession', but only if we do not look far enough back to see the originator of that succession usurping the seat of power from the common people. The violence of the narrator's language in 'Burke's Address to the "Swinish Multitude"', Spence suggests, is no less violent than the sophisticated yet baseless rhetoric that Burke employs in *Reflections*. Additionally, Spence's lines 'Do you think that a KING is no more than a Man?' are reminiscent of Burke's question, 'Do these new doctors of the rights of men presume to assert, that King James the Second, who came to the crown as next of blood [...] was not to all intents and purposes a lawful king of England [...]?'²⁶ The narrator's anachronistic linking of the theory of the divine right of kings with Burke's rhetoric mocks the belief that 'no experience has taught us, that in any[thing] other than that of an *hereditary crown*, our liberties can be [...] preserved [...] as our *hereditary right*'.²⁷ Moreover, Spence's use of pig imagery creates a caricature of Burke in his *Reflections* as a violently dictatorial narrator. As a consequence, the seemingly eloquent rhetoric of Burke is distorted into the violent ranting of Spence's narrator, and becomes inarticulate and unconvincing: even represented as swine, the masses' argument for reform is more coherent than the boorish insults launched from a position of unjustified authority. Spence

²⁵ Burke, op. cit., p. 161.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 173.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 174.

thus exposes Burke's swine imagery as rhetorical clothing for an argument that holds no real substance.

Spence suggests that the image of the 'swinish multitude' is simplistically used by Burke to excuse the political prejudices of the privileged. His appropriation of the image, therefore, inverts its original (perceived) purpose as conservative propaganda into comical, exaggerated caricature, exposing the apparent conservative prejudices of those who take the metaphor seriously. By calling his periodical *Pig's Meat*, Spence wears the swinish image almost as a badge of honour, devaluing the conservative worth of the phrase. He figuratively disarms those who would use it in earnest, taunting them with its newly inverted meaning.

This would suggest that by altering the use of swinish imagery, ownership of the metaphor shifted from the anti- to the pro-revolutionary radical quarter, and indeed, it was not just Spence who contributed to the radical appropriation of swinish imagery in the 1790s. For example, James Parkinson, a pamphleteer of medicine, and the doctor who discovered Parkinson's disease, published *Pearls cast before Swine by Edmund Burke*, and has been identified as the author of *An Address to the Hon. Edmund Burke for the Swinish Multitude*.²⁸ The latter is fashioned as an open letter, in which Parkinson sarcastically thanks Burke for

the favour [...] which you [Burke] bestow on us in the 117th page of your *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, where it is your gracious will and pleasure to apply the appellation of *Swinish Multitude* to a *poor and oppressed people*.²⁹

²⁸ Bartel, op. cit., p. 4.

²⁹ Parkinson, James, *An Address to the Hon. Edmund Burke for the Swinish Multitude* (London: J. Ridgway, 1793), p. 6.

Parkinson claims Burke's appellation is flattering, but that an 'undeserved title, so far from being an honour, is a satyr and a libel on him who wears it'.³⁰ This hints at Burke's support of hereditary titles, and echoes Thomas Paine's suggestion in his *Rights of Man* that aristocratic titles are 'chimerical non-descripts'.³¹ Parkinson implies that all titles are as ludicrous as a class of people being designated as swine, and just as 'undeserved'. Moreover, if the lower echelons of society must be designated as swine, so must the elite:

Let us then be all esteemed as Swine together; we will be satisfied with the plain appellation of the *swinish multitude*; whilst you and your friends, who are so fond of distinctions, shall be termed HOGS OF QUALITY or shall we grudge you the high sounding titles of RIGHT REVERED, MOST NOBLE AND PUISSANT, MOST HONOURABLE GRACIOUS AND ILLUSTRIOUS, HIGH AND MIGHTY CHRISTIAN AND CATHOLIC SWINE.³²

Where Parkinson's satire differs from a publication like *Pig's Meat*, which thumbs its nose at Burke by adopting his perceived insult, is that *An Address to the Hon. Edmund Burke* offers either an unequivocal rejection of the title, or undermines its purpose as a distinctive title by suggesting that the elite are a part of the swinish multitude. Parkinson's prose satire is indicative of the central conflict in much radical satire that exploits the image of the swinish multitude: that of rejecting an insulting designation whilst simultaneously adopting it as emblem of the radical cause.

Daniel Isaac Eaton published a periodical similar to Spence's *Pig's Meat*, entitled *Hog's Wash*, later revised to *Politics for the People, or a Salmagundy for Swine*. In 1794, Eaton was tried for high treason for publishing a short prose satire in *Politics for the People*, entitled 'King

³⁰ Parkinson, op. cit., p. 8.

³¹ Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man* (London: Penguin Classics, 1985), p. 81. For a discussion of Paine's use of this phrase, see below, chapter 5.

³² Parkinson, op. cit., p. 15.

Chaunticlere; or The Fate of Tyranny’, in which a tyrannical barnyard cockerel is captured and executed by decapitation, discussed below in chapter four.³³ As well as claiming that the cockerel in the satire represented George III (which it invariably does), the prosecution attacked the suggestion in the title of Eaton’s periodical – *Politics for the People* – that it is aimed towards ‘the consideration of the lowest class of society’, and that the original title, *Hog’s Wash*,

has been taken up [...] as a sort of comment upon a term or terms which escaped in the heat of debate in parliament from some member there [...] it does not seem to me to convey such an idea as justifies the following it up with such comments, for it has been followed up with a continuance of comment which has extended the meaning [...] infinitely beyond the intention or beyond the mind of the gentleman who made use of it [...] the intention ascribed here is infinitely worse.³⁴

The prosecution’s argument that the radical satirical use of the phrase ‘swinish multitude’ was taken far beyond its original meaning holds some water – indeed it foreshadows Hazlitt’s later noting of the common misquoting of the phrase. However, Eaton’s defence produced a sturdy rebuttal of this position, noting that the phrase was not

an incautious expression in the heat of parliamentary debate, but an expression deliberately and solemnly recorded in a book which has run through ten or twelve editions, and which retains its place in that book to the present hour.³⁵

The implication is that if Burke’s intention had indeed been misrepresented by figures like Eaton, his best course of action would be to alter or omit his

³³ Daniel Isaac Eaton and John Thelwall, ‘King Chaunticlere; or the Fate of Tyranny’, in *BS vol. I*, pp. 44-46.

³⁴ ‘The Trial of Daniel Isaac Eaton’, in Thomas Bayly Howell, *A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason and other Crimes and Misdemeanors: From the earliest Period to the Year 1783*, 34 Vols., Vol. 24 (London: T. C. Hansard, 1817), p. 1019.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1034.

phrase in newer editions of *Reflections*, or address the radical reaction to the phrase. What this debate really illustrates though, is a struggle over the ownership of a term that had proved itself incendiary. Eaton was on trial for the allegedly treasonous publication of ‘King Chaunticlere’, but an attack on the title’s reference to Burke’s term was deemed a significant portion of the evidence against Eaton. The trial of Eaton demonstrates that the adoption of ‘a swinish multitude’ by radical satirists was more than simple mockery, but rather, it was an important part of the fight by radicals to gain legitimacy in the political arena.

2.1 Gillray and the political ambiguity of swine imagery

Eaton’s *Politics for the People* and Spence’s *Pig’s Meat* are examples of satirists who assimilated the phrase into the radical cause, but more politically ambivalent satirists, most notably James Gillray, also exploit the inherent ambiguity of the image. Gillray, one of the most successful print satirists and caricaturists of the period, was particularly skilled in depicting prominent Whig politicians as Jacobin undesirables, designing several prints in that vein for the Tory periodical *The Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine*. Roger Sales comments that Gillray ‘caricatured those who supported the people as little better than a swinish multitude themselves’,³⁶ citing the prints *Pigs Meat, or – the Swine Flogg’d out of the Farm Yard* [fig. 1.1],³⁷ “*More Pigs than Teats*” [fig. 1.2],³⁸ and *The Pigs Possessed* [fig. 1.3],³⁹ all of which

³⁶ Roger Sales, *English Literature in History 1780-1830: Pastoral and Politics* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1983), p. 188.

³⁷ James Gillray, *Pigs Meat, or – the Swine Flogg’d out of the Farm Yard* (London: H. Humphrey, 22 June 1798).

³⁸ Gillray, “*More Pigs than Teats*”, - or – *the new Litter of hungry Grunters sucking John Bulls-Old Sow to death* (London: H. Humphrey, 5 March 1806).

depict the Whig party as a multitude of ravenous piglets that have ruined John Bull's farm with their insatiable appetite. In "*More Pigs than Teats*" [fig. 1.2], the opposition Whigs suckle hungrily at a sow, while the British archetype John Bull exclaims, 'I never had such a doom'd litter of hungry Pigs in all my life before'.⁴⁰ Gillray extends Burke's swinish image beyond its immediate meaning as a metaphor for the people, transposing it onto the politicians that would, as he suggests, support the rabble. Moreover, in this case, the swine do not trample over 'learning' as Burke warned, but instead figuratively suck the country dry of its wealth and strength, in the form of a tired old sow. In addition, Gillray inserts the comment that once the Whiggish swine have finished, the sow will be so drained that there will be nothing left for Napoleon when he inevitably invades: 'She'll make but bad Bacon for Boney, when they's all done sucking her'.⁴¹ The irony is that the Whigs, accused throughout conservative political satire of advocating the French Revolution and a peace with France, are here seen decimating the country to the point where there will be nothing left for Napoleon to plunder when he finally arrives. In both *Pigs Meat* [fig. 1.1] and *The Pigs Possessed* [fig. 1.3], John Bull takes more affirmative action against his swinish parasites, driving out the pigs with the assistance of William Pitt and his ally, the Secretary of State for War, Henry Dundas in the former, and chasing them off a cliff into the ocean in the latter. *The Pigs Possessed* depicts the 'Broad-bottom' ministry as a swinish multitude being driven, along with

³⁹ Gillray, *The Pigs Possessed – or the Broad Bottom'd Litter Running Headlong into the Sea of Perdition* (London: H. Humphrey, 18 April 1807).

⁴⁰ Gillray, "*More Pigs than Teats*".

⁴¹ Ibid.

their proposition for Catholic Emancipation, into the sea, and recalls the New Testament encounter when Jesus exorcised demons from a possessed man:

For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many [...] Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them [...] And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.⁴²

The parallels between Gillray's print and the Biblical verses are clear, in that both represent a corrupt mass of pigs being driven into the sea by a righteous exorcist figure. Although John Bull stops the pigs' plunder in these prints, the message is essentially the same; the Whig party are a ravenous multitude of swine that will leave the country destitute if left to their own devices, and are no better than the mob that they claim to represent.

However, not all of Gillray's prints are as politically unequivocal, and many depict establishment figures such as Burke, or the Prime Minister, William Pitt, in a light little more complimentary than that in which he portrays the opposition Whigs. For example, *Presages of the Millenium* [fig. 1.4], which refers to calls from the Whigs for a peace with France, pictures an emaciated William Pitt riding atop a white horse as the angel of death, sending Whig politicians backwards into Hell whilst galloping over a multitude of pigs.⁴³ Although Fox and his Whig politicians are typically caricatured, so is Pitt, and riding on the flames of his horse's burning tail is Burke depicted as a winged serpent. This is in stark contrast to Gillray's earlier print, *LIGHT expelling*

⁴² Mark 5: 8-13.

⁴³ Gillray, *Presages of The Millenium*; - with *The Destruction of the Faithful, as Revealed to R. Brothers, The Prophet*, & attested by M.B. Hallhead Esq. (London: H. Humphrey, 4 June 1795).

DARKNESS [fig. 1.5],⁴⁴ which depicts Pitt entirely heroically, in a chariot pulled by ‘the British lion and a Hanoverian horse’.⁴⁵ As with *Presages* [fig. 1.4], the Whigs are sent into an abyss, although here it is a blackened cloud rather than Hellish flames. The absence of a caricatured Pitt, or a swinish multitude over which he tramples, and the combination of ‘the comic and grotesque with genuinely heroic imagery’ provides a much more unequivocal satire than *Presages*, where swine are laid waste by the hooves of Pitt’s horse and his flaming sword.⁴⁶ Also notable in *Presages* is the absence of the British lion, and that in *LIGHT expelling DARKNESS* [fig. 1.5] it is winged cherubim carrying a document entitled ‘Brunswick Succession’ who bring up the rear of Pitt’s chariot. In contrast, in *Presages* it is a monstrous little gremlin representing the Prince Regent that rides behind Pitt, holding a ‘Provision for the Millenium £125000’,⁴⁷ which alludes to the Prince’s allowance settled on him after his marriage. The discrepancies between *LIGHT expelling DARKNESS* and *Presages of the Millenium* work to make the latter print a more politically ambiguous one than its precursor.

It is possible to see the use of pig imagery in *Presages* as the seeds of Gillray’s swinish Whigs in later prints such as *The Pigs Possessed* [fig. 1.3]; the way that R. B. Sheridan in *Presages* is lain on the ground mirrors that of the posture of the swine next to him, and provides a link between the politicians cast into Hell behind, and the slain pigs beside him. This perspective would suggest a political stance in the print similar to that of *LIGHT expelling DARKNESS*, but

⁴⁴ Gillray, *LIGHT expelling DARKNESS*, __*Evaporation of Stygian Exhalations*, __or __*The SUN of the CONSTITUTION*, rising superior to the Clouds of OPPOSITION (London: H. Humphrey, 30 April 1795).

⁴⁵ Richard Godfrey, *James Gillray: The Art of Caricature* (London: Tate Publishing, 2001), p. 138.

⁴⁶ Gillray, *LIGHT expelling DARKNESS*.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

this ignores the blatant caricaturing of Pitt, the Regent, Burke and the other establishment characters that are featured in the satire. Furthermore, the association between politicians and the swinish multitude is only implied here, whereas in later prints it is made explicit. Moreover, in any use of swinish imagery, we cannot escape the original meaning of Burke's phrase: that of an unruly rabble that given the chance would cast learning 'into the mire'. *Presages of the Millenium* [fig. 1.4] portrays an emaciated, ghoulish Pitt, previously depicted heroically in *LIGHT expelling DARKNESS* [fig. 1.5], but now not only casting the opposition into Hell, but also obliterating a swinish multitude. In *Presages*, Gillray highlights the ties between a revolutionary underclass and the Whigs, who opposed monarchical *jure divino*, by depicting both the swinish multitude and the Whigs being trampled into the ground alongside one another.

Political ambiguity is one of the key features of Gillray's satires, and can be seen throughout his work, particularly in his early career. Despite his later affiliations with the Tory party, and the work that he undertook for the *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine*, Draper Hill notes that Gillray's

initial response [to the fall of the Bastille] reflected the wave of optimism which swept England during the earliest days [...] During the seven months after the Bastille's fall, English caricaturists were united in optimism.⁴⁸

It was not until December 1790 that Gillray began criticising advocates of the revolution, with his print *Smelling out a Rat* [fig. 1.6], which depicts Burke's giant nose poking in to the room of the dissenting minister Dr Richard Price's 'midnight calculations', involving a 'Treatise on the ill effects of Order &

⁴⁸ Draper Hill, *Mr Gillray the Caricaturist* (London: The Phaidon Press, 1965), p. 42.

Government in Society'.⁴⁹ Burke carries with him the crown and the cross, indicating his moral and political authority. However, as Hill notes, the print retains a 'typical ambiguity, [as] the content of the engraving is critical of Price but the form ridicules Burke'.⁵⁰ Additionally, Hill comments that

the satirist [in general] was commonly available for duty as a propagandist. He could be hired by one faction to attack another or to even a private grudge. [...] Confronted with the devious requirements of this calling, Gillray learned to veil his own opinions beneath layers of cynicism and irony.⁵¹

Hill argues that, 'although inclined to champion virtue over vice, criticize excess of authority, and sympathize with victims of oppression, [Gillray] seldom did so with any apparent conviction'.⁵² Further, he comments that 'once the French Revolution began to menace the security of England, patriotism took precedence over philosophy'.⁵³ Here there is a sense of Gillray's practicality: he was not necessarily a hypocrite, but knew that survival often meant sailing with the political wind and not against it. As such, Gillray was aware that in the climate of the 1790s the 'defence of "the Roast Beef of Old England" was [not only] an ideal theme' for satire, but moreover, the only way to make it as a satirical caricaturist.⁵⁴ Hill posits that 'a satiric temperament seems to impel its possessor to the left, towards a philosophy of social justice'.⁵⁵ Unfortunately for social justice, however, Gillray's conservative customers simply paid better: Gillray reportedly commented that 'the Opposition are poor, they do not buy my prints

⁴⁹ Gillray, *Smelling out a Rat;- or The Atheistical-Revolutionist disturbed in his Midnight "Calculations"* (London: H. Humphrey, 3 December 1790).

⁵⁰ Hill, *Mr Gillray*, p. 42.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁵² Hill, *Fashionable Contrasts: Caricatures by James Gillray* (London: Phaidon Press, 1966), pp. 11-12.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

and I must draw on the purses of the larger parties'.⁵⁶ In addition, any development of Gillray's potential republicanism 'was partially blocked by the Reign of Terror, which [...] obliged him to join in a defence of the *status quo*'.⁵⁷ However, even within the reactionary, anti-reform atmosphere of the late-1790s, there remains an ambivalence to many of Gillray's prints in their apparent support for Tory governmental policy: 'the conversion to anti-Jacobinism did nothing to soften his bias against authority, nor did it improve his treatment of Pitt'.⁵⁸

Gillray's political ambivalence seems to disappear in his prints for the *Anti-Jacobin Review*, particularly when we compare these with his earlier, more independent works, which are full of political ambiguity. *Presages of the Millenium* [fig. 1.4], for example, would be a much less complex work, and a more obvious piece of propaganda if it did not include the swinish multitude being trampled under the hooves of Pitt, who, grotesquely portrayed, wears a crown emblazoned with the word 'Destruction'. Contrast this with the *Anti-Jacobin Review*'s December 1798 "Two Pair of Portraits" [fig. 1.7], which depicts Pitt as dignified, statesman-like and uncaricatured, standing, as a portrait, next to a worried-looking Charles James Fox, and we see how derisively Pitt is pictured in *Presages*.⁵⁹ The target of this print is John Horne Tooke, who had recently converted to the Whig party after having attacked Fox and commended Pitt in his 1788 pamphlet, also entitled 'Two Pair of Portraits'.⁶⁰ Although Pitt's

⁵⁶ Hill, *Fashionable Contrasts*.

⁵⁷ Hill, *Mr Gillray*, p. 46.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁵⁹ Gillray, "Two Pair of Portraits," – presented to all the unbiased Electors of Great Britain," by John Horne Tooke (London: J. Wright, 1 December 1798), in *Anti-Jacobin Review*, vol. 1, facing p. 574.

⁶⁰ John Horne Tooke, *Two Pair of Portraits, Presented to all the Unbiassed Electors of Great Britain; and Especially to the Electors of Westminster* (London: I. Johnson, 1788), cited in Godfrey, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

apparently dignified portrayal could be interpreted ironically, due to Tooke's political shift of loyalty from Pitt to Fox, it is overwhelmingly positive in comparison to the depiction of him in *Presages of the Millenium* [fig. 1.4].

Gillray's attacks on Pittite policy are not limited to the rivalry between his party and the Whigs. In his *Substitutes for Bread* [fig. 1.8], it is not the opposition party who confront the Government, but protesters. They are seen outside a window waving a banner emblazoned with a 'Petition from the Starving Swine' as Pitt and his companions feast on fish, turtle soup and champagne.⁶¹ The print is an indictment of the government's reaction to the bad harvests of 1794 and 1795, which led to widespread suffering and hunger.⁶² During this period, the Government suggested the 'voluntary engagement' of MPs to reduce their personal wheat consumption as an example to the public,⁶³ but Gillray retains a cynical attitude towards this gesture, as he depicts Pitt and his ministers gorging on 'substitutes' for bread such as venison and roast beef. The banner alluding to the swinish multitude signifies the callous indifference of Pitt and his ministers towards the suffering working class, as they dine magnificently while the people are starving outside. In this satire, Gillray's use of the 'swinish multitude' banner works in a similar way to the titles of Spence and Eaton's periodicals: he accepts the designation of the working classes as a 'swinish multitude', but in doing so does not allow that designation to obscure the suffering of the people. Where Gillray differs from Spence and Eaton is that those satirists associate themselves very much with the working classes, whereas Gillray stops at numbering himself among the suffering. In *Substitutes for Bread*

⁶¹ Gillray, *Substitutes for Bread; - or - Right Honorables, Saving the Loaves & Dividing the Fishes*. (London: H. Humphrey, 24 December 1795).

⁶² Hill, *Fashionable Contrasts*, p. 145.

⁶³ Ibid.

Gillray positions the viewer on the inside of the house, with the politicians, looking out. We may sympathise with the protesters, and feel outraged at the indifference of the diners, but Gillray prevents our participation with them. Even in a print like this, Gillray's audience is not the 'swinish multitude' in the way that Spence's or Eaton's audiences are. *Substitutes for Bread* [fig. 1.8] satisfies a readership that may disagree with the oppressive governmental policies of the 1790s, and one that might even have felt the pinch of the bad harvests, but it only observes the protest against suffering – it does not participate in it.

'Burke's Address to the "Swinish Multitude"' by Spence directly attacks the conservative, anti-reform fervour of the post-French Revolution period appropriating the swinish image from Burke and using it as a weapon against him. Gillray carries the metaphor through the 1790s and early 1800s by releasing its political ambiguity, using the swinish multitude to satirise both the Whigs and the Tories. By 1820, however, the political agenda was no longer on foreign revolutions, but on the domestic accession of the lascivious, grossly overweight Prince Regent.

2.2 The Queen Caroline Affair and *Swellfoot the Tyrant*

The early years of the nineteenth century saw a plethora of works, mainly prints, satirising the Regent's tendency to indulge in rich food, alcohol and women. His illegal marriage to the Catholic Mrs Fitzherbert in 1785 found its way one year later into the plates of print satirists such as George Townly Stubbs, who comically depicted the union in *His Highness in Fitz* [fig. 1.9], and then a month

later in *Out of Fits, or the Recovery to the Satisfaction of all Parties* [fig. 1.10].⁶⁴

However, it was the Prince's second marriage, this time legitimate, to Caroline of Brunswick, that would become the more politically and historically significant of the two. The marriage between Caroline and the Prince Regent was not one of love – the two reputedly consummated their marriage only once, on their wedding night. In 1806, Caroline's marital fidelity was officially questioned in the 'Delicate Investigation' scandal, and in 1814 she was exiled to Europe. In 1820, leading up to the Regent's coronation, Caroline defied George and his court by returning to England to claim her place beside her husband. As a result, she was brought before a tribunal to prove her alleged adultery during her time abroad, and in 1821 was barred from the Prince Regent's coronation.⁶⁵ Jones comments that

The Ministry's anxiety over the [...] succession was the main reason for the intense attention to the absent Princess. The "trial" made it clear that the real threat posed by Caroline was not to her husband's peace of mind but to the peace and stability of the realm [...] The image of civil war [...] lurked behind these debates and must have fed back into the series of popular demonstrations in support of the Queen after her return in [...] 1820.⁶⁶

She was offered £50,000 a year to renounce her title and not to return to England. When she refused, a green bag full of evidence of the Queen's overseas adultery was collected throughout June and July 1820 and produced in the House of Lords on the 17th August. The green bag was traditionally used to deliver evidence in court, but in the Caroline Affair it became emblematic of the corruption of the

⁶⁴ George Townly Stubbs, *His Highness in Fitz* (Fores, 1786), and *Out of Fits, or the Recovery to the Satisfaction of all Parties* (Fores, 1786), reproduced in Gatrell, op. cit., pp. 12 and 13, respectively.

⁶⁵ For a summary of the Caroline Affair, and its preceding events, see Sales, op. cit., pp. 178-186. For an excellent overview of the radical support of Caroline in the years surrounding the scandal, its significance as an emblem of the radical cause, and the pro-Caroline literature that arose during this period, see McCalman, op. cit., pp. 162-177.

⁶⁶ Jones, *Shelley's Satire*, p. 126.

proceedings against the Queen, the purpose of which was initially to blackmail her into remaining abroad. However, by the 6 June she had already returned to England, and on her arrival, she was greeted with massive popular support, particularly from the radical quarters of society.⁶⁷

Michael Erkelenz claimed in 1996 that

Any account of the political function of Shelley's [*Swellfoot*] must begin by correcting the view of the Caroline Affair and Shelley's attitude towards it that has prevailed in Shelley studies [...] No critic, not even the most recent, has looked upon the Affair as having had any real political significance.⁶⁸

While broadly correct, Jones gave an account in 1994 of *Swellfoot* and its relationship to the scandal that suggests both are more important than they have been given credit for.⁶⁹ More recently, wider criticism has re-evaluated the significance of the Affair. For example, Thomas W. Laqueur's observation of the contemporary public furore could equally be applied to modern debates over its importance:

Seldom has there been so much commotion over what appears to be so little as in the Queen Caroline affair, the agitation on behalf of a not-very-virtuous queen whose still less virtuous husband, George IV, wanted desperately to divorce her.⁷⁰

Of course, as Laqueur notes, 'The uproar was [...] about more than a royal domestic quarrel. King George's efforts to [...] degrade the queen [...] assumed

⁶⁷ Sales, op. cit., pp. 178-184.

⁶⁸ Michael Erkelenz, 'The Genre and Politics of Shelley's *Swellfoot the Tyrant*', in *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, 47:188 (November 1996), pp. 500-520, here p. 509.

⁶⁹ Jones, *Shelley's Satire*, pp. 125-126. See also Jones, *Satire and Romanticism* and Jones (ed.), *The Satiric Eye*. Erkelenz cites *Shelley's Satire* but claims that it appeared too late for him to discuss in his article.

⁷⁰ Thomas W. Laqueur, 'The Queen Caroline Affair: Politics as Art in the Reign of George IV', in *Journal of Modern History*, 54 (1982), pp. 417-466, here p. 417.

symbolic weight far in excess of its manifest political or constitutional importance'.⁷¹ Echoing Laqueur, Samuel Lyndon Gladden posits that

The treatment of Queen Caroline *is* the treatment of the people, her abuses symbolic for their own; such, too, are the effects of Iona Taurina, the scorned wife and would-be monarch of Shelley's *Swellfoot the Tyrant*.⁷²

Similarly, Erkelenz argues that the Caroline Affair was 'much more than a tawdry personal dispute outrageously politicized by a cynical opposition'.⁷³ Rather, it was

a lightning rod for the most powerful and universal expression of political dissent that nineteenth-century Britain had yet seen. Inevitably, this expression of political dissent involved a far greater issue than the Queen's persecution by a cruel husband and his lackey-ministers. The addresses and resolutions brought before her at Brandenburgh House consistently linked the rights being denied the Queen with the rights that the government had withdrawn from the people.⁷⁴

The abuse of the Queen's rights therefore became the perfect allegory for the abuse of the public's. As Erkelenz reminds us, shortly before the Caroline Affair, the Six Acts had restricted freedom of the press and the right to assembly, and so in 'prosecuting the Queen's cause [...] the protestors were also consciously prosecuting their own'.⁷⁵

Anna Clark has posited that

Recently, royal sexual scandals of the past have been redeemed from gossip and recognized as contributing an important dimension to political symbolism. Especially during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, scandals

⁷¹ Laqueur, op. cit.

⁷² Samuel Lyndon Gladden, *Shelley's Textual Seductions: Plotting Utopia in the Erotic and Political Works* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 53.

⁷³ Erkelenz, op. cit., p. 511.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 511-512.

⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 512.

about a monarch's personal life were neither anachronistic nor trivial; rather they turned on the relation of virtue to power.⁷⁶

This was undoubtedly the driving force behind much of the material published on the Affair. The radical periodical *The Black Dwarf*, for example, acknowledged that 'Shouts in favour of the Queen insult the Monarch in his own palace',⁷⁷ but it was only the sheer volume and force of those shouts that gave each one any symbolic significance. Radical satirists exploited the abuse of Caroline by the Regent and the establishment by characterising it as representative of the oppression of the people. The symbolic weight accorded to the Caroline Affair, then, simultaneously encouraged and grew from the popular support for the Queen, and Shelley's satire directly taps into the wellspring of popular support.

In a critical history that mirrors that of the Caroline Affair, it is mainly recent criticism that has been receptive to *Swellfoot the Tyrant* as a significant text. Until fairly recently, the critical response to *Swellfoot the Tyrant* has been characterised by examples such as Gerald McNiece's description of Shelley's motivation to write *Swellfoot* as simply a desire to strengthen his 'rather feeble partisanship for Caroline's party',⁷⁸ or Ronald Tetreault's assessment of the drama as a 'repellent satire'; one where 'the bitterness of its tone, the clumsiness of its allegorical machinery, and the crude avowal of its message all conspire to make it repugnant as a work of art'.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Anna Clark, 'Queen Caroline and the Sexual Politics of Popular Culture in London, 1820', in *Representations*, 31 (1990), pp. 47-68, here p. 47.

⁷⁷ Cited in Sales, op. cit., pp. 179-180.

⁷⁸ Gerald McNiece, *Shelley and the Revolutionary Idea* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 68.

⁷⁹ Ronald Tetreault, *The Poetry of Life: Shelley and Literary Form* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. 159.

The dismissal of *Swellfoot* espoused by critics such as McNiece and Tetreault is not limited to Shelley's choice of the Caroline Affair as background material. In 1921 Newman I. White suggested that

few readers of Shelley devote much time to *Oedipus Tyrannus*, or *Swell-foot the Tyrant* [because] [i]ntrinsically, the play is not worth it [...] The revolting setting, with its thigh-bones and skulls, the outrageous characters introduced [...] together with extravagant speeches and actions [...] have combined to make most readers regard the poem as a failure even when taken for no more than was meant.⁸⁰

However, when considered alongside the 'numerous and popular' satires on the Caroline affair, White does acknowledge that Shelley's drama has significance, as part of a satiric tradition that appropriates and recycles popular imagery.⁸¹ The green bag, for example, that is intended to poison Swellfoot's estranged wife Iona Taurina in *Swellfoot* 'figures prominently' in 'nearly all [the] literature' on the Caroline affair, to include works by writers such as 'William Hone, Theodore Hook, the Tory editor of *John Bull*, and George Cruikshank.'⁸² Indeed,

very few of the satires and cartoons [...] fail to mention the green bag, and many of them center [sic] everything around it. Shelley's satire resembles the others not merely in the fact of using this Green Bag, which would not be a very unnatural coincidence in itself, but in the manner of using it.⁸³

White's purpose here is to establish the connection of Shelley's satire to other contemporaneous works, arguing that a 'comparison of Shelley's drama with the contemporary satires [...] establishes [...] that Shelley borrowed largely from his anonymous contemporaries in both manner and idea'.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Newman I. White, 'Shelley's Swell-Foot the Tyrant in Relation to Contemporary Political Satires', in *PMLA*, 36:3 (September 1921), pp. 332-346, here p. 332.

⁸¹ White, op. cit., p. 334.

⁸² Ibid., p. 335.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 346.

More recent criticism, however, has re-evaluated *Swellfoot* as an important satire of the period. Jones, for example, recognises the political and cultural significance of the Caroline Affair:

There were riots in London, and the streets leading to the Houses of Parliament were barricaded, lined with troops to control the crowds. It is not necessary to read the activity of the crowd [...] as a manifestation of working-class consciousness in order to see that it posed a threat to the status quo.⁸⁵

Furthermore, ‘attached to her public appearances [was] a sense of imminent danger, even the threat of revolution’.⁸⁶ Jones defends Shelley’s drama by arguing that it was not ‘a literary oddity [...] but [...] a satire meant to be published and read, [...] meant to be popular’.⁸⁷ More recently, Gladden has positioned the play as a key example of Shelley’s ‘thoroughgoing understanding of the political power of erotic transgression’.⁸⁸ In addition, Gladden states that ‘The deep connections between Shelley’s satire and contemporary political events cannot be overlooked’ and that ‘the Queen Caroline Affair demonstrated the power of the press and of public spectacle, as well as the collusion of these forces at the site of political unrest’.⁸⁹

The Regent’s public mistreatment of his wife was used by radicals as a model for his mistreatment of the British people. As Anna Clark notes, ‘Since the repressive and profligate king was extremely unpopular, Caroline immediately became a symbol of opposition’.⁹⁰ William Hone’s 1820 prose satire *The King’s Treatment of the Queen* exemplifies the dissatisfaction with the recently-crowned

⁸⁵ Jones, *Shelley’s Satire*, p. 126.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 125.

⁸⁸ Gladden, op. cit., p. 52.

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 52-53.

⁹⁰ Anna Clark, op. cit, p. 47.

George IV and the effectiveness of Caroline as an emblem of that dissatisfaction.

Hone's opening paragraph states that

It has long been the proud boast of Englishmen, that in *their* country, no case of individual oppression dare be committed with impunity [...] their hearts were never cold, when persecuted innocence claimed their protection. It has been reserved for those times to witness an attempt at one of the foulest; one of the most cruel and unmanly cases of individual oppression that ever disgraced any country of any age.⁹¹

That 'individual oppression' refers of course to Caroline, and Hone goes on to compare George's mistreatment of her to the tyranny of Henry VIII, and the similarities of their hedonistic youth:

In his [Henry's] youth, he was popular – comely in person---elegant in address--generous to appearance. He was a Prince of the fairest promise, but time unfolded his real character: he became towards his friends, ungrateful; towards his people, tyrannical; towards woman, capricious, cruel, and implacable [...] his person [...] became a gross unhealthful and unwieldy mass.⁹²

The extract suggests an anxiety not over the king's past conduct, but what his maltreatment of Caroline points towards as a future King. However, Hone's later assertion that 'the glittering pomp, the high sounding titles, and all the imposing ostentatious vanities of rank [...] are of little value unless allied to truth, to wisdom, and to virtue', better reveals the motivation behind his and other satires.⁹³ This statement refers to the use of the notorious 'green bag' of evidence presented at Caroline's hearing, which allegedly contained damning proofs of Caroline's infidelities. Hone implies the green bag is emblematic of the 'glittering pomp, the high sounding titles and all the imposing ostentatious

⁹¹ William Hone, *The King's Treatment of the Queen, shortly stated to the People of England* (London: William Hone, 1820), p. 3.

⁹² Hone, op. cit., p. 4.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 24.

vanities of rank [which] may dazzle the vulgar', but are ultimately hollow symbols of authority.⁹⁴

The green bag was the dominant symbol of satire on the Caroline Affair, and it features prominently in Hone's other satires on the Affair, such as *The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder* and *The Green Bag: "A Dainty Dish to set before a King"*.⁹⁵ As the support for Caroline grew, so did the significance of the events surrounding her 'trial'. Although this took place as planned, in the form of a vote on a Bill that would divorce Caroline from George, stripping her of her title, it eventually came to nothing.⁹⁶

3.1 The Swinish Multitude in *Swellfoot the Tyrant*

Of the myriad satires produced in 1820, Shelley's *Oedipus Tyrannus, or Swellfoot the Tyrant* is perhaps the most important, and complex. *Swellfoot the Tyrant* depicts a society in which the eponymous tyrant rules over a starving multitude who have degenerated in the eponymous Swellfoot's reign from free-roaming bulls to filthy, servile pigs. Swellfoot's wife, Iona Taurina, has been banished from the kingdom, and, on prophesying that she will return and lead the swine to rebel, Swellfoot's wizard Purganax sends a leech, a gadfly and a rat to discourage her return to Thebes, Swellfoot's kingdom. However, she does return, and after a show trial involving a green bag full of poison, similar to the green

⁹⁴ Hone, op. cit.

⁹⁵ Hone, *The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder, A National Toy, with Fourteen Step Scenes; and Illustrations in Verse, with Eighteen other Cuts* (London: William Hone, 1820), and *The Green Bag: "A Dainty Dish to set before a King;" A Ballad of the Nineteenth Century* (London: J. Robins, 1820). Laqueur, has noted that the green bag 'became the symbol of all that was rotten about the whole case. Like the boot and the petticoat in early Wilkite processions, the bag was used with great virtuosity in demonstrations and in print', in op. cit., p. 436. Similarly, White notes the sheer volume of satires on the Affair, and that 'In nearly all this literature the symbolical green bag features prominently', in op. cit., p. 334-335.

⁹⁶ After the vote on 6th November, the prosecution won by a majority of twenty-eight on the Second Reading of the Bill of Pains and Penalties, but by the Third Reading only got through by a majority of nine. For more on the trial proceedings, see Sales, op. cit, pp. 184-5.

bag of evidence used in the Caroline Affair, she overpowers Purganax, Swellfoot and the rest of his court, which results in the transformation of the pigs into bulls, and her leading them to the prophesied insurrection. Shelley combines classical and contemporary cultural allusions in *Swellfoot*. For example, he juxtaposes political imagery such as the green bag and the swinish multitude, both of which would be immediately recognisable to a contemporary audience, with an obscure classical structure, based on the comic plays of the Greek dramatist Aristophanes. Erkelenz notes that

Swellfoot [...] has often been described as an Aristophanic comedy [...] As he had already done in the 'Ode to Naples', Shelley in *Swellfoot* draws on the conventions of a Greek literary form to address an unresolved political crisis.⁹⁷

Erkelenz argues that Shelley alludes to Aristophanes in order to 'influence [his] readers' views on the Caroline Affair'.⁹⁸ Additionally, Aristophanes is not the only classical source: Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* is the most apparent, with Shelley's full title, *Oedipus Tyrannus, or Swellfoot the Tyrant* offering what Erkelenz describes as a 'burlesque imitation' of the Greek tragedy.⁹⁹ He highlights the parallels between Oedipus' entrance and Swellfoot's, stating that

Shelley means to draw a parodic contrast between Oedipus' mode of kingship and Swellfoot's. Where Oedipus greets his subjects with a compassionate altruism, Swellfoot shows the pigs only a pitiless egoism.¹⁰⁰

Erkelenz notes, however, that the classical allusions in the text are highly esoteric and would not have been widely accessible to a popular audience.¹⁰¹ This seems at odds with the otherwise populist tone of the satire: if his primary readership

⁹⁷ Erkelenz, op. cit., p. 500.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 501.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

was supposed to be plebeian, then his classical allusions would be rendered meaningless. Conversely, what purpose would the satire have if it were intended for a more educated readership who could fully appreciate Shelley's allusions?

Gary Dyer claims that

despite Shelley's tongue-in-cheek pretense that this work is a translation of an ancient Greek drama, he intended it for the heterogeneous crowd who frequented London printshops and publishers, or who borrowed satirical pamphlets, rather than for the people he termed "the chosen spirits of the time," his own intellectual vanguard.¹⁰²

Dyer also notes that the satire was 'quickly bought up by the Society for the Suppression of Vice', and so any attempt by Shelley to disguise *Swellfoot's* true audience with obscure classical allusions was not missed by the establishment.¹⁰³

In the first scene of *Swellfoot* the swine are starving, mistreated and oppressed by their ruler. After admiring his 'kingly paunch / [that] swells like a sail before a favouring breeze',¹⁰⁴ the eponymous tyrant asks the 'Swine', characterised as a single mass, 'what are ye, / Who, crowned with leaves devoted to the Furies, / Cling round the sacred shrine?'¹⁰⁵ The only answer they initially venture is the inarticulate 'Aigh! aigh! aigh',¹⁰⁶ but then admit their apparent

¹⁰² Dyer, op. cit., p. 76.

¹⁰³ Ibid. The mistaking of a publication's audience by the censors has protected other dissenting literature. On the publication of the two parts of Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*, Herzog, in op. cit., p. 511, has reflected on the imagined separation between rational and unthinking readers:

Starry-eyed subjects should gaze on the nobility as the Corinthian capital of polished society. Coolly rational citizens should confront the news that many nobles were perfectly ready to play parasites, pimps, and buffoons. The same schism, remember, explains the attorney general's failure to prosecute the first part of Paine's *Rights of Man*, which he thought would fall into the hands of elite readers capable of seeing through its lethal stupidities, and his spirited prosecution of the second part on learning that the lower orders were greedily ingesting the poison.

As Dyer points out, however, this was not successful for Shelley's drama.

¹⁰⁴ Percy Shelley, *Oedipus Tyrannus, or Swellfoot the Tyrant*, in *Poetical Works* (London: Oxford University Press, 1991), I, i, ll. 3-4.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., ll. 17-19.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. l. 19.

guilt at being pigs: 'only now the name / Of Pig remains to me'.¹⁰⁷ This illustrates not only the pathetic situation of the swine, but hints at the later revelation that they have fallen from a state of bull-like grace. In this scene Shelley suggests that the swinishness of the multitude stems directly from their oppression at the hands of Swellfoot's regime. The Chorus of Swine demonstrate their degenerate state in the lines, 'we Pigs / Were bless'd as nightingales on myrtle sprigs / [...] But now our sties are fallen in, we catch / The murrain and the mange, the scab and itch'.¹⁰⁸ In the drama, Mammon tells Purganax that the

dull Swine of Thebes boast their descent
From the free Minotaur. You know they still
Call themselves Bulls, though thus degenerate,
And everything relating to a Bull
Is popular and respectable in Thebes.¹⁰⁹

In this, Shelley's satire is unique: he mythologizes the swinish multitude by creating a past in which they were free bulls. Satirists such as Spence and Eaton disempower the image of the swinish multitude by embracing it, accepting the designation but remaining persistent in their demands for reform. Effectively, satirists like Spence use swine imagery not because they believe their readers are swinish, but because they are not. The name 'swinish multitude', for Spence and other radicals is meaningless. In contrast, Shelley not only accepts the name of 'swinish multitude', but also accepts that the multitude may really be swinish. However, in doing so, Shelley undermines the image more effectively than Spence or Eaton do because he shows that the working classes have degenerated into inarticulate grunTERS, and because they have been treated as such by the establishment.

¹⁰⁷ Shelley, op. cit., l. 32.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., ll. 39-44.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., ll. 139-143.

Despite this, Spence, Eaton and Shelley's satires still work in basically the same way: the lower classes' acceptance of the label of swine ultimately gives them control of the image: they are able to turn it against conservatives like Burke, and ultimately liberate themselves altogether of the negative association. This is exemplified in Shelley's work when, at the end of the play, the swinish multitude overthrow Swellfoot. The swine have reverted back to their true forms as freeborn Bulls, and certainly, the final scene, in which Iona Taurina leads the bulls out of the temple to complete their insurrection, seems to confirm that this transformation has restored the swine to a more noble form. The imagery of John Bull is crucial to this scene, and Shelley uses John Bull as a popular archetype of the British people to suggest that political change, either reform or revolution, is needed to restore Britain and the British to their formerly coveted state of liberty.¹¹⁰ John Bull and the swinish multitude both represent the British people, but in very different ways. Whereas Bull is the idealised version of the people, noble and invested with a supposedly incorruptible and British brand of liberty, the swinish multitude are the degenerate, ugly reality.

This is where *Swellfoot the Tyrant* differs from other radical satires that use swine imagery: *Pig's Meat* accepts the assignation of the term, but it is an ironic acceptance. Spence calls his periodical *Pig's Meat* to illustrate the meaninglessness of Burke's phrase: the working classes may as well be called 'a swinish multitude' as it makes no difference to either their situation or their demands for reform. In contrast, *Swellfoot the Tyrant* accepts that there may be some truth to Burke's phrase, but that it is the result of oppression from the elite,

¹¹⁰ John Bull was created by John Arbuthnot in 1712, in a series of Tory satires. Throughout the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, Bull was used by both radical and conservative satirists, in a history that in several ways mirrors the radical acquisition of swine imagery. See below, chapter two, for a fuller discussion of this history.

amongst whom Burke is numbered. Moreover, Shelley suggests that the swinishness of the multitude is due in large part to the fact that they have been described and treated as such.

Gladden provides an interesting identification of the specific groups that Shelley means to represent in the swinish multitude. In order to position Shelley's allusive satire alongside the other Caroline ephemera, he points to Mary Shelley's note on *Swellfoot*, where she identifies her husband's inspiration for the play as stemming from an experience near a market in San Giuliano.¹¹¹ After noting the contemporary currency of swine imagery following Burke's phrase in *Reflections*, Gladden points out that the term "pig" functioned as slang for both "a police officer" and "a pressman in a printing office", positing that

police and pressman regularly engaged in contests for authority [...] Printers effectively usurped authority from the police, so that just as in Shelley's play, one set of "pigs" displaced another as the keepers of hegemonic order. The swinish multitudes of *Swellfoot the Tyrant*, I believe, *are* those radical pressman who reconstructed Queen Caroline's transgressions as symbolic acts of revolution, those artists who assembled the stories about her Continental improprieties into a metanarrative of the struggle for freedom.¹¹²

Shelley uses pig imagery in *Swellfoot the Tyrant* to create not only an allegory of the Caroline Affair, but also of the satirical literature that rose up around it, transforming it from a public scandal into a symbol of monarchical oppression and popular uprising. Shelley wrote at a (literal and figurative) distance from the

¹¹¹ See Mary Shelley's account, in 'Notes on Oedipus Tyrannus, By Mrs Shelley', in Shelley, op. cit., p. 410:

the Baths of San Giuliano [...] where] Shelley read [aloud] his *Ode to Liberty*; and was riotously accompanied by the grunting of a quantity of pigs brought for sale to the fair. He compared it to the 'chorus of frogs' in the satiric drama of Aristophanes; and, [thus], he imagined a political-satirical drama on the circumstances of the day, to which the pigs would serve as chorus – and *Swellfoot* was begun.

¹¹² Gladden, op. cit., pp. 61-62.

Affair, commenting on the popular response to the scandal as much as the scandal itself. In a letter to Thomas Love Peacock, Shelley wrote that

Nothing, I think, shows the generous gullibility of the English nation more than their having adopted her Sacred Majesty as the heroine of the day [...] I cannot help advert[ing] to it as one of the absurdities of royalty, that a vulgar woman, with all those low tastes which prejudice considers as vices, and without any redeeming virtues, should be turned into a heroine because she is a queen.¹¹³

Although he wished ‘no harm to happen to her’, Shelley had no overwhelming love for the Queen, and was not convinced by her protestations of marital fidelity.¹¹⁴ However, to Shelley, this is irrelevant – it is the textual version of her, constructed by dozens of pro-Caroline pamphlets, broadsides and satires, that *Swellfoot* is concerned with, and her power as a popular symbol of unrest. Moreover, his comment on ‘the generous gullibility of the English nation’ reinforces the argument that Shelley saw to an extent why Burke might describe the people as ‘a swinish multitude’.

Many early and mid twentieth-century historians saw only a trivial scandal in the Caroline Affair, whereas later scholars have seen its contemporary symbolic political importance, but Shelley saw both. He realised that Caroline probably had been unfaithful to the Regent, just as the Regent was unfaithful to her, and he saw the hypocrisy of turning a woman like Caroline into a heroine simply because of her position, or the position of her husband. However, Shelley also highlights that the hero worship directed at Caroline was indicative of the popular dissatisfaction with a corpulent and self-indulgent monarch. Even in *Swellfoot*, Iona Taurina is little more than a cipher who embodies the ills done towards the multitude. In the play, Shelley realises that the swinish multitude

¹¹³ Cited in Gladden, op. cit., p. 56.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 56.

need a symbolic leader to show them the way to self-liberation. In the penultimate scene a chorus of swine even chant that ‘Hog-wash has been ta’en away: / If the Bull-Queen is divested, / We shall be in every way / Hunted, stripped, exposed, molested’: Shelley pays homage here to Eaton and other satirists who used pig imagery in the 1790s, and posits that there needs to be a new figure of persecution (like Eaton in the 1794 treason trials) for the swinish multitude on which to focus.¹¹⁵ That figure is of course Caroline, idealised in *Swellfoot* as Iona.

Swine imagery in Romantic-era satire stems directly from Burke’s use of the term in his *Reflections*. Where many radicals respond to Burke’s phrase with outrage at the apparent depiction of the working classes as an inarticulate rabble, Gillray maintains a political ambiguity in his swine prints by caricaturing both Whig and Tory figures. Although he openly attacks the Whigs in prints such as *Pigs Meat* [fig. 1.1], he also presents disparaging caricatures of figures such as Pitt in *Presages of the Millenium* [fig. 1.4], in which he tramples over a multitude of helpless swine. Gillray’s satirical distance is best summarised in *Substitutes for Bread* [fig. 1.8], which refers to the widespread suffering of the mid-1790s, and the government’s apparent indifference to it, but by keeping the perspective on the inside of the room, away from the protesters, does not venture to openly condemn the establishment, or side with the rabble.

Shelley, writing in 1820, maintained a critical perspective on the phrase similar to Gillray, but retained a radical comment on governmental oppression and popular dissatisfaction with George IV. Where Spence and Eaton held up the phrase in their periodicals as symbols of their defiance against the government (after being acquitted in 1794, Eaton renamed his printing shop ‘The Cock and

¹¹⁵ Shelley, op. cit., II, i, ll. 137-140.

Swine¹¹⁶), Shelley humours the thought that there may be truth to the description of a politically agitated underclass, but goes further by asking why they have degenerated into swine. Furthermore, he commented not only on the Caroline Affair itself, but also on the popular satirical response to it. It is likely that Shelley had little personal interest in the scandal itself – certainly he was not caught up in the heroine-creation of Caroline, or the facade that she had remained faithful to the Regent. However, Shelley recognised in the Affair what the radicals in the 1790s recognised in the image of the swinish multitude – an emblem of oppression and popular dissatisfaction. Shelley is the only satirist to have tied both sets of imagery together in this way, and it works because both were adopted, in different ways, by a popular radical movement. Moreover, tying together the imagery of the swinish multitude and the Caroline Affair (particularly the green bag) links the events of the Caroline Affair to the governmental oppression of the 1790s. This in turn expands the image of Caroline as a wronged queen, emblematic of a populace dissatisfied with the Prince Regent in 1820, into a symbol for governmental oppression not just in 1820, but rather throughout the whole period.

¹¹⁶ Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

Chapter Two

‘Everything Relating to a Bull is popular and Respectable in Thebes’: Gillray, Shelley, and the Iconography of John Bull

Although the swinish multitude was one of the most iconic images in the satire of the Romantic period, the British archetype John Bull had a far wider cultural reach than Burke’s pig metaphor. Bull was created in 1712 by John Arbuthnot in a series of pamphlets collectively titled *The History of John Bull*. The image of John Bull was still in wide use up to the early twentieth century when the figure was frequently used in advertising.¹ Indeed, John Bull is the supreme emblem of the British people. Appealing both to the middle and lower classes, Bull represents a far broader demographic than the swinish multitude, which, in Burke’s use, only represented a potential revolutionary mob in Britain.

Where Burke’s swinish multitude originally represented a fearful or oppressed ‘other’, Bull, as a composite of the British people, is a figure that the contemporary reader is encouraged to identify with directly. Although radical satirists such as Thomas Spence suggested that their readers should identify with the image of the swinish multitude, the connection between John Bull and the reader is not, as with swine imagery, an ironic inversion of the metaphor’s original purpose: from his first appearance, John Bull was designed to directly represent the people reading about him. Moreover, where the swinish multitude only ever represents the people as an undifferentiated collective, Bull, in contrast, comes to represent varied levels of British society, but embodied as just one individual, such as an abused taxpayer in Gillray’s *John Bull ground down* [fig.

¹ A modern chain of seaside candy-rock shops, another archetypically British emblem, trades under the name John Bull Confectioners. Additionally, Miles Taylor, in ‘John Bull and the Iconography of Public Opinion in England c. 1712 – 1929’, in *Past and Present*, 134 (1992), pp. 93-128, identifies five twentieth-century companies that used the figure of John Bull, including Dunlop, and the gravy manufacturer Oxo, which used the image of John Bull as recently as the 1980s.

2.1], or the country yokel in his May 1798 print *The Tree of Liberty* [fig. 2.2].²

Ben Rogers has suggested that the John Bull in Gillray's prints

is only distantly related to the honest, jovial, patriotic Englishman of most Bull prints. Instead he is almost invariably depicted as a grotesquely ugly, moronic, gullible and ungrateful creature, a representative of what Burke contemptuously referred to as the 'swinish multitude'.³

Gillray characteristically exaggerates Bull's grotesque features, and in prints such as *John Bull bother'd* [fig. 2.3] Bull's gullibility and confusion is emphasised.⁴ In many prints, Bull's significance as a satiric representative of the British people is tied to the imagery of the swinish multitude, but John Bull is not a representative of the group that Burke refers to in *Reflections*. Bull appears variously as a farmer, a country yokel and an urban businessman. Occasionally, as in *John Bull bother'd*, he is depicted with copies of texts such as Paine's *Rights of Man* in his pocket, but nowhere is he depicted as dangerously revolutionary in the way that the swinish multitude are. The imagery of Bull and pigs is inarguably related in the period's satire, but it is not the case that Bull is an individual representative of the swinish multitude.

Sales comments that 'the image of a swinish multitude never ousted John Bull from his position in the centre of the caricaturist's stage'.⁵ This is in no small part due to the fact that Bull's cultural heritage extends much further back into the eighteenth century than Burke's image of the swinish multitude. Unlike swine imagery, John Bull's political connotations are traditionally fairly loose.

Although Bull was invented by the Tory John Arbuthnot and for a Tory agenda,

² James Gillray, *John Bull ground down* (London: H. Humphrey, 1 June 1795), and *The Tree of Liberty, - with, the Devil tempting John Bull* (London: H. Humphrey, 23 May 1798).

³ Ben Rogers, *Beef and Liberty* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2003), p. 163.

⁴ Gillray, *John Bull bother'd; - or - The Geese alarming the Capitol* (London: H. Humphrey, 19 December 1792).

⁵ Sales, op. cit., p. 188.

throughout the eighteenth century the figure comes to represent a broad English nationalism that transcends party politics, particularly throughout the 1790s and early 1800s by which time he was appearing in satires across the political spectrum.

There have been quite a number of studies on the use of John Bull in the eighteenth century, particularly on the figure's impact on British national identity. For example, Tamara L. Hunt has discussed the subject of John Bull's place in eighteenth-century British national identity relative to that other emblem of national consciousness, Britannia.⁶ Additionally, in her study *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, Linda Colley discusses the November 1793 print by James Gillray, *The French Invasion; - or – John Bull bombarding the Bum-Boats* [fig. 2.4], which depicts England and Wales as a giant George III who is expelling war ships out of the south of England towards France.⁷ Colley summarises the satire as one that may initially seem like 'little more than a blatant piece of scatological disrespect', but that actually portrays the King 'in the most intimate sense possible entirely at one with England and Wales [...] They give him shape, but he gives them identity'.⁸ It is significant, then, that Gillray characterises George III in his print as John Bull, the model for British identity. If the King shapes the identity of Britain (or at least, in this print, England and Wales), then for that identity to make sense it must be understood as coming from John Bull, who effectively becomes synonymous with national identity. It is no mistake that Gillray associates Bull with George III, who was the most anglicised of the Hanoverians. Where this study differs from the work by

⁶ Tamara L. Hunt, *Defining John Bull: Political Caricature and National Identity in Late Georgian England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003). See chapter four, 'Britannia, John Bull and National Identity', pp. 121-169.

⁷ Gillray, *The French Invasion; -or- John Bull, Bombarding the Bum-Boats* (London: H. Humphrey, 5 November 1793).

⁸ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London: Pimlico, 1994), p. 210.

previous scholars such as Hunt is in its analysis of Bull in direct relation to the image of the swinish multitude, and to the wider landscape of animal imagery in the political satire of the Romantic period. It is important to situate John Bull alongside the image of the swinish multitude, because the iconographic impact of Bull and the political meaning of the figure makes most sense in the context of the kind of pig imagery I discuss in chapter one. This is especially evident in satires where the imagery of John Bull and the swinish multitude are used simultaneously, such as Gillray's "*More Pigs than Teats*" [fig. 1.2], and Shelley's *Swellfoot the Tyrant*. Revisiting satires such as *Swellfoot the Tyrant* demonstrates the importance of discussing the figure of John Bull not in isolation, but as part of a cultural marketplace that is in continuous dialogue with itself. This has a significant impact on the wider discursive aims of this thesis, namely, to argue that the animal metaphors utilised by the period's satirists affect both the politics of the satires they are used in, and the historical, cultural and political contexts in which those satires are situated.

Thus, the final section of this chapter concludes with an analysis of the way Shelley incorporates John Bull into his satire *Swellfoot the Tyrant*. The structure of this chapter consciously mirrors that of the previous chapter, and by doing this, I hope to draw parallels between John Bull and the image of the swinish multitude, arguing that although each metaphor is designed and utilised for significantly different political reasons, the history of both images up until 1820 is remarkably similar. Because of this, and due in no small part to Shelley's use of both images in *Swellfoot*, both John Bull and the swinish multitude develop as symbols not simply of the British people, but of a British people oppressed and exploited by the establishment.

1.1 Arbuthnot and *The History of John Bull*

Alan Bower and Robert Erickson have asserted that ‘almost everyone has some idea of “John Bull” as the cartoon symbol of the English people’, and Taylor posits that ‘In his eighteenth-century form, [Bull] has usually been recognized as both the personification of England and a timeless reminder of Englishness’.⁹ Bower and Erickson note that there ‘is a constant tendency in Arbuthnot [...] to take a humanizing view of their country [...] and] John Bull is the epitome of this [...] tendency’.¹⁰ Roy T. Matthews considers that Arbuthnot may have drawn inspiration for Bull’s name from several real-life figures, such as the seventeenth-century musician John Bull, Tory activist Henry St. John or the writer Sir Richard Bulstrode. However, Matthews points out that

The origins of John Bull’s name have never been satisfactorily documented, which may account for his universal appeal, combining the surname of several famous men alive at the beginning of the eighteenth century with an animal whom the English used in their search for national identity.¹¹

Matthews argues that ‘what John Bull represented and how he motivated others to write about him and to draw him was of far greater consequence in developing English and British nationalism than the origins of his name’.¹² In addition, noting that ‘Arbuthnot richly described John Bull’s personality [and] physical features’, Matthews posits that

⁹ Alan W. Bower and Robert A. Erickson, ‘Preface’ in John Arbuthnot, *The History of John Bull* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. vii, and Taylor, op. cit., p. 100, respectively.

¹⁰ Bower and Erickson, ‘Introduction’ in op. cit., lxxxii.

¹¹ Roy T. Matthews, ‘Britannia and John Bull: From Birth To Maturity’, in *The Historian*, 62:4 (Summer 2000), pp. 799-820, here p. 813.

¹² Ibid.

Arbuthnot was apparently inspired by Aesop, L'Estrange, Mandeville, and other purveyors of animal and folk tales to borrow from their use of beasts to characterize human behaviour, and this may have influenced him in fabricating the name John Bull.¹³

Similarly, Rogers points out that 'Animals had long been used to represent national characters and Arbuthnot made use of the old stereotypes', and that his creation gradually 'entered the culture as the personification of the active, quarrelsome, simple-minded English people'.¹⁴ Arbuthnot achieves in his depiction of the English both a compliment to them and an insult; they are 'plain-dealing', and understand their immediate business, but simultaneously are susceptible to potential abuse and exploitation from other, less noble parties.

In *Law is a Bottomless-Pit*, Bull is 'quick and underst[ands] business very well, but no Man alive [is] more careless, in looking into his Accounts, or more cheated by Partners, Apprentices, and Servants'.¹⁵ Matthews argues that this characterisation reflects Arbuthnot's background as a scientist: 'His John Bull emerges simply as a representation of the bluff, down-to-earth Protestant Englishman – nothing more than what he is'.¹⁶ Arbuthnot, then, is consciously creating an archetype of English national character, and Bower and Erickson argue that 1712 was a 'propitious' year for John Bull to first appear:

English national consciousness, nursed by the Tudors received a rude shock when the 1688 Revolution established on the throne a man who 'although King of *England*, was a Native of *Holland*'.¹⁷

English national identity, they suggest, had recently undergone major changes; the Glorious Revolution and the years of the Commonwealth still being in living

¹³ Matthews, op. cit., p. 813.

¹⁴ Rogers, op. cit., p. 148.

¹⁵ Arbuthnot, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁶ Matthews, op. cit., p. 810.

¹⁷ Bower and Erickson, 'Contexts', in op. cit., p lix.

memory, as well as the more recent changes in the roles and composition of parliament, the rise of party politics, and the Act of Union in 1707. John Bull unifies these disparate and fragile fragments of English identity under an umbrella of gruff, practical, yet naïve sensibilities.

1.2 Political Allusions in *The History of John Bull*

The History of Bull is one of the most allusive texts of the eighteenth century, and therefore makes sense only when set firmly within its context, and the 1707 Act of Union is one of the more easily identifiable allusions in the pamphlets. Where Bull represents the English, his sister, Peg, represents the Scottish. She is described in the third pamphlet, *John Bull Still in His Senses*, as ‘a poor Girl that had been starv’d at Nurse; any Body would have guess’d Miss to have been bred up under the Influence of a cruel Step-Dame’.¹⁸ John is compared to her as looking

ruddy and plump, with Cheeks like a Trumpeter; [whereas] Miss look’d pale and wan, as if she had the Green-Sickness; and no wonder, for *John* was the Darling, he had all the good Bits [...] while Miss had only a little Oatmeal and Water, or a dry Crust without Butter.¹⁹

Peg is drawn as a sympathetic figure, yet despite her appearance and origins, she is not weak: ‘she had Life and Spirit in abundance, and knew when she was ill used’, and the ‘Fisticuffs’ she and her brother frequently engage in are indicative of the tempestuous and volatile history of English-Scottish relations.²⁰ Arbuthnot himself supported the Act of Union, advocating it on the basis that Scotland

¹⁸ Arbuthnot, *John Bull Still in His Senses*, in op. cit., p. 49.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 50.

would see trade benefits of a union with England, and that it would end the domination of the ‘three fatal sisters’ of ‘Pride, Poverty, and Idleness’.²¹

Another of the major issues that Arbuthnot’s pamphlets allude to is the Treaty of Grand Alliance of 1701 between England, Holland and Austria. The treaty was set up in response to the dilemma of who would succeed the ailing Charles II of Spain. It was agreed that the Bourbon Philip V would become King of Spain, as long as the French and Spanish monarchies did not unite, thus securing trade for the ‘maritime powers’ of Holland and England whilst protecting Spain from devolution to the Habsburg dynasty.²² A condition of this was that Austria would be given ‘certain territories’, and that, in ‘effect, the Allies agreed to drive France out of Italy and the Spanish Netherlands’.²³ The relationship between John Bull and Nicholas Frog, representing the Dutch, clearly reflects this. For example, the first chapter of *Law is a Bottomless-Pit* begins with the lines,

I need not tell you of the great Quarrels that have happen’d in our Neighbourhood, since the Death of the late Lord *Strutt*; how the Parson and a cunning Attorney, got him to settle his Estate upon his Cousin *Philip Baboon*, to the great Disappointment of his Cousin Esquire *South*.²⁴

The late Lord Strutt represents the dead Charles II, King of Spain, and Phillip Baboon, Philip, Duke of Anjou, and from 1700 the King of Spain.²⁵ The alliance between Britain and Holland is developed throughout the rest of the pamphlet, embodied in John Bull and Nicholas Frog. For example, chapter two sees Frog and Bull discussing the prospect that ‘this old Rogue [Lewis Baboon, Louis XIV]

²¹ Bower and Erickson, ‘Contexts’, in op. cit., p. xlviii.

²² Ibid., pp. xlii-xliv.

²³ Ibid., p. xlv.

²⁴ Arbuthnot, *Law is a Bottomless-Pit*, in op. cit., p. 5.

²⁵ See the list of ‘Principle Characters’ in ibid., p. cii.

will take the Management of the young Lord's Business into his Hands',²⁶ depriving them of their trade.

As Bower and Erickson argue, the unease of the Maritime Powers at the insecurity of their trade, that Arbuthnot expresses in his satire, ultimately led to a war in which the Duke of Marlborough would prove 'himself one of England's greatest generals',²⁷ and where he would forge a successful political partnership with Sidney Godolphin, who led the ministry as Lord Treasurer from 1702-1710.²⁸ They posit that by '1712 it would be a natural, and merciless, allegorical step to represent this alliance [between Captain-General Marlborough and Lord Treasurer Godolphin] as an illicit union between John Bull's extravagant first wife and his unscrupulous "attorney general", "Hocus"'.²⁹ Indeed, this can be identified in chapter eight, where, '*John* had not run on a madding so long, had it not been for an extravagant Bitch of a Wife, whom *Hocus* perceiving *John* to be fond of, was resolv'd to win over to his side'.³⁰ The narrator comments that

It is a true saying, *That the last Man of the Parish that knows of his Cuckoldom, is himself*. It was observed by all the Neighbourhood, that *Hocus* had Dealings with *John's* Wife, that were not so much for his Honour [...] When *John* us'd to be finding fault with his Bills, she us'd to reproach him as ungrateful to his greatest Benefactor.³¹

This passage reflects the Tories' anti-war policy towards the War of the Spanish Succession, and its presence here identifies the British people as being exploited by the suggested fortune and glory-hunting of Godolphin (Bull's wife), and Marlborough (Hocus). Furthermore, Bull here is presented as initially rather

²⁶ Arbuthnot, *Law is a Bottomless-Pit*, in op. cit., p. 6.

²⁷ Bower and Erickson, 'Contexts', p. xlv.

²⁸ Ibid. For further evidence of their partnership, see Henry L. Snyder (ed.) *The Marlborough-Godolphin Correspondence*, 3 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1975).

²⁹ Bower and Erickson, 'Contexts' pp. xlv-xlv.

³⁰ Arbuthnot, *Law*, in ibid., p. 12.

³¹ Ibid., p. 13.

naïve, unaware that he is being ‘cuckolded’. However, Bull becomes suspicious of his wife’s infidelity, and the subsequent, comical, throwing of a Bottle at [Bull’s wife’s] Head very brutally indeed’,³² represents the political pamphlet wars that ensued after the trial of Henry Sacheverell, who gave a sermon attacking the Whigs and Godolphin.³³ In a sermon Dr. Sacheverell heavily criticised the policy of Toleration. The sermon was published, and was so popular it went through eleven editions.³⁴ The popularity of the sermon led to a furore which ended with the lengthy trial in which Sacheverell was barred from preaching for three years.³⁵ Geoffrey Holmes argues that ‘the prosecution of Dr. Sacheverell created a climate in which the adherents of both parties [the Whigs and Tories] saw their politics in blacks and whites more sharply contradistinguished than at any time since the Exclusion Crisis of Charles II’s reign’.³⁶ Moreover, he suggests that ‘the significance of the Sacheverell debates and trial can easily be underestimated’, describing the volume, and success, of the Tory pamphlets published during the Sacheverell Affair as ‘a storm’.³⁷ Undoubtedly, Arbuthnot’s John Bull pamphlets can be considered a part of this ‘storm’ of pamphleteering. In *Law is a Bottomless Pit*, Arbuthnot identifies Bull not only with the British public, as he is abused by his wife (Godolphin), but also with Tory party members and pamphleteers, as a participant in a ‘pamphlet war’ of smashed crockery, thus directly associating the Tory party with the British people.

³² Arbuthnot, *Law*, p. 14.

³³ Bower and Erickson, p. 142, n. 1.

³⁴ Julian Hoppit, *A Land of Liberty? England, 1689-1727* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 233.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 234. Accounts of the Sacheverell Affair can be found in Hoppit, *op. cit.*, Geoffrey Holmes, *British Politics in the Age of Anne* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1987), Holmes, *The Making of a Great Power: Late Stuart and Early Georgian Britain, 1660-1722* (Essex: Longman Group UK, 1993), and G. V. Bennett, ‘Conflict in the Church’, in Holmes (ed.), *Britain after the Glorious Revolution, 1689-1714* (London: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 155-175.

³⁶ Holmes, *British Politics*, p. 93 and p. 48, respectively.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

Finally, the catalyst that sparked the publication of the first *John Bull* pamphlet, *Law is a Bottomless-Pit*, was the Tories' need for an end to the war: 'against [the] formidable alliance [of Hanover, Austria and Holland, who wanted to prolong the war], the ministry needed all the skills of the Tory pamphleteers'.³⁸ This included Jonathan Swift's *The Conduct of the Allies*, and of course Arbuthnot's *Law is a Bottomless-Pit*, both of which 'quickly went through six editions'.³⁹ *The History of John Bull* appeals

to both the town-Whig and the country-Tory persuasions at once [...] Arbuthnot fused in the character of John Bull many of the conventional traits of the 'old Whig' country squires [...] with the role of a similarly obstinate City tradesman [...] who suddenly falls under the spell of the aristocratic 'new Whigs' and aspires to become a lawyer, the most prominent early eighteenth-century representative of the 'new professionalism' and one of the most frequently satirized.⁴⁰

Bower and Erickson argue that Bull summarises the 'divided society' of early eighteenth-century England by combining 'the conflicting personalities of old and new Whig in one body'.⁴¹ As a cloth merchant, Bull represents the English people in general, but more specifically, the city Tory – the 'town brother' of the country squire, who was at 'the heart of the Tory party' in the late-seventeenth century.⁴² However, although the pamphlets were written by a Tory, and essentially for a Tory cause, the reason that the John Bull character persists throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries lies in his universal appeal. The most vital character trait of John Bull is not his political affiliations, but that he represents the common Englishman. John Bull is used by satirists for political agendas, but his character, and the narratives that are told in the satires in which

³⁸ Bower and Erickson, 'Contexts', p. lv.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. liv-lv.

⁴⁰ Bower and Erickson, 'Introduction', p. lxxv-lxxvi.

⁴¹ Ibid., lxxvi

⁴² Ibid., p. lxx.

he appears remain the same – that of an essentially good Englishman, attempting to make an honest way through life, suffering abuse and exploitation by his less scrupulous neighbours and superiors, but ultimately triumphing through his innate, common British good sense.

2.1 John Bull and Identity in the Romantic period

Bull's core traits, his guile, his quick temper, healthy appetite, but also his occasional naivety and vulnerability to exploitation remain completely intact throughout his eighteenth and early nineteenth-century incarnations. The John Bull that Arbuthnot describes in his pamphlets, cheated on by his wife and deceived by those whom he perceives as foreign allies, is remarkably similar to the farmer in Gillray's "*More Pigs than Teats*" [fig. 1.2] who laments his over-used sow, laden down by greedy suckling piglets representing Whig politicians. The historical and political backgrounds have changed, but John Bull is the same, similarly exploited by those in a position to do so, as he tries to do his best for himself and his country (in the Gillray print represented by the sow), all the while inwardly suspecting that he is being swindled. Indeed, Roy T. Matthews has noted that

Arbuthnot so effectively established Bull's personality and appearance that few writers, artists, illustrators or cartoonists have been willing to make any major changes [...] few substantial changes have occurred in his persona for nearly 300 years.⁴³

The reason for this lies in Bull's universality. He is a national 'model [...] adopted by Englishmen to explain themselves to others and to justify their

⁴³ Matthews, op. cit, p. 812.

behaviour', ⁴⁴ and this transcends not only political boundaries, but also boundaries of ownership – he is common cultural property. Above Bull's own clearly-defined personality, the most important aspect of the figure is that he is in the public domain: when Gillray, for example, uses Bull in an anti-Whig print, it does not place ownership of the image in that political quarter. This is in stark contrast to the use of the image of the swinish multitude, which throughout the period was fought over by radical and conservative satirists. The appropriation by radical satirists of Burke's swine imagery was a statement in political self-assertion, but that statement was only effective because the image was originally such a strong anti-revolutionary metaphor. In contrast, although John Bull also represents a section of the British people perceived to suffer at the hands of the Government, when radical or conservative satirists use that figure there is no act of appropriation of the image because John Bull is in the public domain in a way that the swinish multitude is not. When satirists use the image of the swinish multitude, it necessarily comes coded with a comment on the last person or group to have used it, or at the least, the history of the image's use, but when satirists use John Bull, it is almost as if his presence in the satire is incidental, as if he is naturally part of the background. For satirists in the 1790s, the swinish multitude becomes the embodiment of the British working classes at that moment in history, but John Bull represents a broader, more mythical version of the British people.

Draper Hill notes that the 1790s saw an influx of cartoons featuring John Bull:

⁴⁴ Matthews, *op. cit.*, p. 812.

faced during the 1790's [sic] with an atmosphere of international ideological crisis, satiric engravers found occasion to employ John Bull roughly six times as often as in the comparatively insular decade which preceded it.⁴⁵

Additionally, Patricia Köster and Noel Turner note that Gillray began using John Bull in his cartoons in 1790, when he represents the figure literally as a bull.⁴⁶ In his 1803 print, *The Corsican Carcase-Butcher's Reckoning Day* [fig. 2.5], Napoleon is depicted as a butcher, with the European nations strung up in his shop as slaughtered meat. Outside, a fleet of ships sails across the Channel to confront him, and a bear claws at the shop's doorframe. A giant bull stands defiantly on the Dover cliffs, signifying the last free 'beast' of Europe, and the end of Napoleon's tyrannical 'butchery'.⁴⁷ This confrontation between Bull and Napoleon is dramatically and violently realised in an 1808 print, as Napoleon is depicted as a bull-fighter in Gillray's *The Spanish-Bull-Fight* [fig. 2.6].⁴⁸ Here, as with his butcher's shop, three defeated bulls lie at Napoleon's feet, representing Dutch, Prussian and Danish 'bull beef'. However, the Spanish bull charges Napoleon, breaking free of its Corsican chain and tossing him into the air, whilst simultaneously urinating on an unconscious Joseph Bonaparte. Bonaparte was placed on the Spanish throne by Napoleon in 1808, and this subsequently led to the Spanish Peninsular War, which ended in 1814 in Spain's favour. Although Gillray's Spanish, Dutch, Danish or Prussian bulls do not directly represent the British John Bull, there is still a clear link between the defiant bull threatening Napoleon on the shores of Dover in *The Corsican*

⁴⁵ Hill, *Mr. Gillray*, p. 46.

⁴⁶ Patricia Köster and Noel Turner, 'Baptist Noel Turner's "Intelligence of John Bull": An Allegorical Satire on the Subscription Controversy', in *Church History*, 54:3 (September 1985), pp. 338-352, here p. 342.

⁴⁷ Gillray, *The Corsican Carcase-Butcher's Reckoning Day* (London: H. Humphrey, September 1803).

⁴⁸ Gillray, *The Spanish – Bull – Fight, or the CORSICAN MATADOR in Danger* (London: H. Humphrey, 11 July 1808).

Carcase-Butcher [fig. 2.5], and the bull that physically topples Napoleon in *The Spanish-Bull-Fight* [fig. 2.6]. Moreover, we note Britain's involvement in the Peninsular War on Spain's side, and thus that a bullish metaphor representing Britain could be exported to its allies.

On the portrayal of John as an actual bull versus a human being, Hill notes that in the

atmosphere of international and ideological crisis [of the 1790s] Gillray's John Bull, previously vague, sometimes an actual bull, now took shape as a squat, bland, long-haired yokel.⁴⁹

Indeed, most of Gillray's depictions of John Bull do conform to this category of a 'yokel', but in *The Corsican Carcase-Butcher* and *The Spanish-Bull-Fight* we see that in the succeeding decade, Gillray returns to a literal interpretation of Bull's name. Moreover, it is on the international scale that John transforms into a real bull, seen hollering on the white cliffs of Dover, or as his European cousins are slaughtered in a bull fight. Additionally, Hill argues that 'John, the common man at the mercy of his betters, seldom stands for the entire nation as Britannia does'.⁵⁰ However, seen from the external perspective of the European stage, John Bull does become emblematic of the entire British nation. This stage is of course represented quite literally in *The Spanish-Bull-Fight*. It is in the domestic arena where John is representative of the British people, but not of the entire nation. It is when he is at home that Bull most strongly embodies the individual Englishman. As an international figure he is portrayed as an actual bull, a symbol of British defiance in the face of French imperialism. In quite an important way, in *The Corsican Carcase-Butcher* and *The Spanish-Bull-Fight*, Bull loses some

⁴⁹ Hill, *Mr Gillray*, p. 46.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

of the individuality that defines him as a character and actually becomes more closely related to the metaphor of the swinish multitude, which, in conjuring the image of a mob, explicitly denies any sense of individuality. The difference between the images of Bull and the swinish multitude is that John Bull as an international figure is a symbol of defiance against French imperialism. The swinish multitude, in contrast, originates from Burke's anti-revolutionary tract and is therefore associated with the French republicanism that John Bull defies. Ironically, however, both John Bull abroad and the swinish multitude at home represent similarly vague concepts of the British people, and both are used as potent images representative of the danger that France posed to traditional British values in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.

The threat of a French invasion, and the subsequent threat to the British monarchy meant that by the end of the eighteenth century English national identity was potentially highly unstable. Hunt suggests that

Britons were urged to defend 'king and country' in the struggle against Gallic republicanism, which meant the established social and political order. However, caricatures show that the definition of the status quo was in flux [...] Thus, the struggle against republican France became an iconographical contest as well, one which sought to identify the best way to symbolize the national values for which Britons sacrificed, fought and died. But at a deeper level, this struggle tended to highlight what it meant to be British, and was a significant background factor in the emergence of a new, more modern version of the collective national identity. Artists experimented with several different figures, but ultimately, John Bull emerged as the most popular symbol of the nation, marking the growing importance of middle-class public opinion.⁵¹

In addition, Hunt draws an important comparison between John Bull and the other national emblem of the British Isles, Britannia, asserting that the first print

⁵¹ Hunt, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

in which they appeared together, the 1807 *Britannia in Tribulation for the Loss of Her Allies* [fig. 2.7],⁵² creates a distinction between the figures:

It is significant that the way that these two icons are depicted in this print implies that they are not simply interchangeable symbols for Britain; John Bull appears to represent the British people, while Britannia symbolises the spirit of the nation.⁵³

Thus, John Bull is a figure with a distinct purpose outside Britannia's, embodying the populace of the land that is invested with the spirit of Britannia. Matthews also argues that John Bull as a national icon was distinct from Britannia. He posits that it is Britannia's 'classical heritage', that 'forever separates her from John Bull'. He explains that

Britannia was tied to the ruling classes and destined to be always associated with lofty ideals [...] By contrast, John Bull, the first vernacular image, came from the people and personified many traits that Englishmen thought lay deep in their collective character.⁵⁴

This would suggest, then, a conflict, not of politics, but between classical and contemporary notions of English nationalism, with Bull clearly representing the latter. Moreover, John Bull represents an intersection of British patriotism at which the radical and conservative satirists of the Romantic period meet. Hugh Cunningham has argued that Bull's patriotic credentials were exploited as much by the radicals of the 1790s as by the anti-reformists, monarchists and Tories of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.⁵⁵ Taylor is critical of Cunningham's position that John Bull experienced a shift to the right in the

⁵² Charles Williams, *Britannia in Tribulation for the Loss of Her Allies, or John Bull's Advice* (London: Elizabeth Walker, August 1807), cited in Hunt, p. 143.

⁵³ Hunt, op. cit.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Hugh Cunningham, 'The Language of Patriotism 1750–1914', in *History Workshop*, 12 (1981), pp. 8–33.

nineteenth century, pointing out that ‘Bull was accessible to a range of groups across the political spectrum at all times [...] John Bull could symbolize either oppositional radicalism or defensive conservatism’.⁵⁶ In contrast to the ‘swinish multitude’, which only ever represents a caricatured underclass, Bull represents a far broader class of British citizen, ranging from a bumbling yokel to what Roy Porter has described as, a representative ‘of the political voice of the middle classes’, more in line with the original depiction of Bull in Arbuthnot’s pamphlets.⁵⁷

The sense of Bull’s naivety and vulnerability to being abused is evident in Gillray’s *JOHN BULL & his Dog Faithful* [fig. 2.8], where, blind and crippled, Bull is led by Pitt, personified as a dog, along the edge of a precipice, and Sheridan tugs backwards at his wooden leg.⁵⁸ Bull is hopelessly dependant on his guides, but despite this Pitt leads him perilously close to the edge of the cliff. Sheridan, tugging at Bull’s wooden leg appears to be pulling him away from the edge, but the bone already in Pitt’s mouth suggests that Sheridan is self-interestedly looking for his own bone. Meanwhile, Charles Fox looks on in passive horror but offers no help to Bull. The print refers to the recent proposal by John Dent in the House of Commons for a tax on dogs, which would supposedly lead to ‘the relief and benefit of the poor’.⁵⁹ Hill notes that Sheridan dismissed the bill as unprecedented in its absurdities.⁶⁰ Referring to the bill’s exemption for guide dogs, Sheridan inspired Gillray’s imagery with his comment in the House of Commons that ‘as dogs which lead blind men are exempted from

⁵⁶ Taylor, op. cit., pp. 95-96.

⁵⁷ Roy Porter, ‘Review Article: Seeing the Past’, in *Past and Present*, 118:1 (1988), pp. 186-205, here p. 198.

⁵⁸ Gillray, *JOHN BULL & his Dog Faithful* (London: H. Humphrey, 20 April 1796).

⁵⁹ Hill, *Fashionable Contrasts*, p. 147.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Mr Dent's tax, Ministerial Dogs will, of course, pay nothing'.⁶¹ Gillray interprets Sheridan's imagery literally by having the Ministerial Dogs leading the unwitting John Bull along the edge of ruin, pointing to Gillray's own pessimism over the effectiveness of the dog tax. The dogs are there apparently for the benefit of the disabled John Bull, just as Dent's Dog Bill was drafted for the apparent benefit of the poor. Bull's blindness, however, obscures from him both the immediate danger of the cliff, and the squabbling between the dogs, just as the Dog Bill, Gillray suggests, offers little in the way of real relief to the poor of Britain, burdened by the debts that Bull carries on his back in the print.

Gillray's representation of Bull in the 1796 print is itself unusual: *John Bull & his Dog Faithful* [fig. 2.8] does not present the more familiar bumbling yokel typified by other prints such as *The Tree of Liberty* [fig. 2.2],⁶² which portrays an obese John Bull being tempted by Charles Fox at the tree of 'Opposition', or *John Bull taking a Luncheon* [fig. 2.9], which depicts a massive John Bull gorging on a dinner of naval ships.⁶³ In contrast, the figure in *John Bull and his Dog Faithful* is far from obese: he is dressed in rags, is blind and has a wooden leg and a hook for a hand. Hill has noted that 'In times of plenty Gillray's John Bull was almost invariably represented as a squat, bland, complacent country yokel'.⁶⁴ However, the John Bull of this print is not the well-fed figure of other satires, but one quite literally falling to pieces. Oppressive legislation, such as the Seditious Meetings and the Treason Acts of 1795 and widespread poverty were symptoms of a society in disrepair, and so if John Bull represents British society, then it is fitting that his own health should reflect that

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Gillray, *The Tree of Liberty*.

⁶³ Gillray, *John Bull taking a Luncheon: __ or __ British Cooks, cramming Old Grumble-Gizzard with Bonne-Chère* (24 October 1798), in Hill, *Fashionable Contrasts*, plate 29.

⁶⁴ Hill, *Fashionable Contrasts*, p. 147.

of the nation. Moreover, *John Bull & his Dog Faithful* displays Gillray's lack of strong political allegiances, depicting both Whig and Tory politicians fighting over who gets to appear to be protecting John Bull the most, all the while pulling him apart.

In times of plenty, however, Bull was more recognisable as a ruddy-faced yokel, ostensibly stupid but wry enough to know when he is being scammed. Gillray's *The Tree of Liberty* [fig. 2.2] is one such instance of this, in which Charles Fox tempts Bull with the rotten apples of French liberty. Bull is not fooled, though, as his pockets are already stuffed with apples plucked from the tree of Justice, which stands behind the tree of Liberty. Speaking to Fox, Bull remarks

Very nice N'apple indeed! – but my Pokes are all full of pippins from off tother Tree; & besides, I hates Medlars, they're so domn'd rotten! that I'se afraid they'll gee me the Guts-ach for all their vine looks!⁶⁵

Bull is not taken in by Fox's promise of a 'nice Apple, Johnny! – nice Apple', and so glances backwards and grins at him with a wry smirk. Richard Godfrey comments that although he is 'gross and essentially stupid, [Bull] has enough native sense to resist the blandishment of Fox'.⁶⁶ *The Tree of Liberty* highlights the contradiction inherent in the John Bull figure – that he is simultaneously naive and wry, vulnerable to exploitation yet aware of the unscrupulous blandishments of his neighbours and superiors. Crucially, John Bull is used by satirists such as Gillray to make political comment, usually on the exploitative nature of politicians, but Bull himself, representing the British people, remains consistently apolitical. He is at the centre of politics and political discourse, is

⁶⁵ Gillray, *The Tree of Liberty*.

⁶⁶ Godfrey, op. cit., p. 151.

affected by political decisions, but is never an active participant, and consistently disenfranchised by the system of governance. He is at best a knowing observer, illustrated in *The Tree of Liberty* [fig. 2.2], or as the hapless farmer in “*More Pigs than Teats*” [fig. 1.2], but sometimes he is denied even that privilege, as evidenced in *JOHN BULL & his Dog Faithful* [fig. 2.8].

John Bull’s passivity in the political world is a crucial aspect of his character, and one which encourages further comparisons with the swinish multitude. Gillray’s December 1795 print, entitled *Substitutes for Bread* [1.8], for example, shows in its background a banner declaring a ‘Petition from the Starving Swine’, while in its foreground lies a sack of ‘potato bread’ labelled ‘Product of New Taxes upon John Bull’s property’.⁶⁷ The ‘bread’ that is to be ‘given in charity’ to the labouring classes has itself been taxed from those labourers, represented by ‘John Bull’. As John Bull, the people have taxable property, and their primary concerns are the acquisition and retention of wealth. The print implies that John Bull’s central concern is to pay as little tax as possible. In contrast, the concerns of the swinish multitude, also representing the British people, are much more immediate – they are protesting not because they are being taxed too heavily, but because they are starving. Of course, taxation and the ability to afford food are linked, but *Substitutes for Bread* implies an important distinction. Moreover, Bull himself is not present in the print, suggesting that the suffering of the people has extended beyond economic troubles into a more profound hardship. Additionally, between John Bull and the swinish multitude it is the latter that are active in their struggle – they protest visibly outside while John Bull is nowhere to be seen, which reinforces the sense of Bull’s passive role in politics. Arguably, Bull is more disenfranchised than the

⁶⁷ Gillray, *Substitutes for Bread*.

swinish multitude, who have seized their own political voice, implicitly in this print, through force.

2.2 *Swellfoot the Tyrant* and the Insurrection of John Bull

Bull's portrayals in satire, in varying degrees, generally depict him as owning money and sometimes property, in contrast to the swinish multitude, who are unruly, dangerous and destitute. When money and property are taxed by the government, it is the property and money of John Bull. Represented as Bull, the British populace are businessmen and merchants; they are citizens with a civic duty to uphold the values of British liberty through the payment of taxes. However, the distinction between the swinish multitude and John Bull is not always clear or immutable. Bull is reliably passive in politics – he may blurt out a verbal protestation or exclamatory remark immediately after he has been routinely exploited, but he never makes an effort to alter the status quo, or to effectively challenge the authority that rules over him. By the nature of the figure, John Bull cannot rebel in any meaningful or dangerous way – if he were to do so he would effectively stop being John Bull. However, this of course does not mean that the British people cannot revolt, but rather, if they were to act subversively when they do this, they would be represented by the image of the swinish multitude.

It is possible, therefore, for John Bull and the swinish multitude to transform into one another, and the supreme example of this is Shelley's *Swellfoot the Tyrant*, in which the eponymous tyrant rules over a swinish multitude that has degenerated from bulls into pigs. Chapter one, above, discusses Shelley's use of swine imagery in *Swellfoot*, but his use of the iconography of John Bull in the play is at least as important, and represents the clearest moment when the imagery of the swinish multitude and John Bull are

conflated. In *Swellfoot*, Shelley utilises the notion of John Bull as the ideal Englishman, invested with both personal liberty and independence – and highlights the status of Bull as an idealised figure through the pigs’ nostalgic recollections of their previous Bullish forms. In contrast, the pigs in their present form are dominated by a tyrant, whose advisers warn of an insurrection borne from the iconography of bulls. Importantly, this is the only instance in satire where the imagery of John Bull inspires a successful revolt, but crucially, it is achievable only because it is channelled through the rebellion of the pigs. Swellfoot’s arch-priest of famine, Mammon, cautions that the pigs continue to

Call themselves Bulls, though thus degenerate,
And everything relating to a Bull
Is popular and respectable in Thebes.
Their arms are seven Bulls in a field gules;
They think their strength consists in eating beef,–
Now there were danger in the precedent
If Queen Iona –⁶⁸

Purganax the wizard cuts off Mammon here, but his meaning is clear nonetheless: the iconography of Bull does not only hold nostalgic and sentimental value for Swellfoot’s subjects – under his oppressive regime the imagery of John Bull is highly political and incendiary. Iona Taurina, whose name puns on both ‘John’ and the zodiac sign of the bull, is the embodiment of the pigs’ mythic ideal of their bullish past. In the final scene, after Iona upsets the contents of the green bag and the floor of the temple cracks open, the ancient Minotaur rises up and delivers a speech:

I am the Ionian Minotaur, the mightiest
Of all Europa’s taurine progeny –
I am the old traditional Man-Bull;

⁶⁸ Shelley, *Swellfoot the Tyrant*, i, ll. 140-147.

And from my ancestors having been Ionian,
 I am called Ion, which, by interpretation,
 Is JOHN; in plain Theban, that is to say,
 My name's JOHN BULL; I am a famous hunter,
 And can leap any gate in all Boeotia,
 Even the palings of the royal park,
 Or double ditch about the new enclosures;
 And if your Majesty will deign to mount me,
 At least till you have hunted down your game,
 I will not throw you.⁶⁹

The Minotaur and Iona are equivalent to each other, the former being John Bull's ancient, original incarnation, and the latter being modern, and subversively, female.

This subversion is heightened not only by the Minotaur's bawdy invitation for Iona to 'mount' him, but for her, not him, to hunt down her enemies. Samuel Gladden positions Iona's rebellion as a demonstration of Shelley's 'thoroughgoing understanding of the political power of erotic transgression'. Through her insurrection, Iona not only feminises the masculine public sphere, but also feminises the symbol of masculine, public Britishness, that of John Bull, both by riding the minotaur and by mirroring his name in her own.⁷⁰ In his article "'England Yet Sleeps": Intertextuality, Nationalism, and Risorgimento in P.B. Shelley's *Swellfoot the Tyrant*', Thomas H. Schmid paraphrases Gladden's position, arguing that the character of Iona

reveals [...] critical intersections between the discourses of gender and politics in the satire. In Gladden's reading [...] Iona Taurina encodes both a politically subversive sexual transgressiveness [...] and Shelley's particular perception that all such

⁶⁹ Shelley, *Swellfoot the Tyrant*, II, ii, ll. 103-115.

⁷⁰ Gladden, 'Shelley's Agenda Writ Large: Reconsidering *Oedipus Tyrannus*; or, *Swellfoot the Tyrant*', in *Romantic Circles Praxis Series: Reading Shelley's Interventionist Poetry, 1819-1820* (May 2001), not paginated. Available at <http://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/interventionist/gladden/gladden.html> (Accessed: 12th October 2010).

linkages between sexuality and political power [...] can be deployed in the service of both political amelioration and intransigent forms of tyranny.⁷¹

Shelley, Schmid points out, reflects the subversiveness of Queen Caroline's sexuality by having Iona 'mount' the Minotaur in an act that combines female sexual dominance and political power. Moreover, Gladden suggests that

Because Iona's erotic body functions as the site of her political power, it seems only logical that her political triumph at the play's end would be manifested in that very body; and in fact, this is exactly the case. Iona's mounting of the Minotaur—John Bull, or England—not only suggests her political power but also spectacularizes that power in terms of a gendered transaction.⁷²

Iona, as Gladden suggests, subverts the masculine notion of Englishness by sexually dominating John Bull, imposing a new hegemonic national identity.

Shelley's conflation of Iona's sexuality and her political power reflects his ambivalent support for Caroline. Despite his attack on the monarch in *Swellfoot*, Shelley felt little personal amity for the Queen, and in a letter to Thomas Love Peacock expressed no doubts that she had 'amused herself in a manner rather indecorous'.⁷³ Shelley sees no reason to lionise Caroline's behaviour simply because of her or her husband's positions as Queen and King. However, he also recognises the massive symbolic power that the Caroline Affair gained through the public's support of the Queen, and of its subsequent potential to shine a light on the wider oppression and hypocrisy perpetrated by the establishment. In *Swellfoot*, therefore, Shelley aligns himself with the radical support of Caroline, but simultaneously casts a wry glance at the fervent pro-

⁷¹ Thomas H. Schmid, "England Yet Sleeps": Intertextuality, Nationalism, and Risorgimento in P.B. Shelley's *Swellfoot the Tyrant*, in *Keats Shelley Journal*, 53 (2004), pp. 61-85, here p. 67.

⁷² Gladden, 'Shelley's Agenda Writ Large'.

⁷³ Cited in *ibid*.

Caroline propaganda and unthinking support of her, that effectively heroises ‘a vulgar woman [...] without any redeeming virtues’.⁷⁴ This can be seen especially in the final scene, when Caroline usurps Swellfoot only to replace his authority with her own. Schmid would agree, positing that Iona’s ‘liberation of the swine is only temporary [...] her triumph in fact engenders a typically Shelleyan reversal of power positions that ironically preserves a power’s tyranny’.⁷⁵ Although the play ends with an ostensible revolution of the pigs, Schmid suggests that this is merely prologue to the replacing of one form of tyranny with another. Furthermore, this would hold true to the fact that John Bull, by his nature, cannot lead a meaningful revolution: by the end of the play, Swellfoot is deposed but the tyrannical status quo remains the same.

It is also significant that Iona mounts John Bull, ‘England itself’, as Schmid puts it, to achieve this, effectively replacing the Bull as the figurehead of England with herself. However, although the Queen does mount John Bull, the symbol of England, she does it as Iona Taurina, the female counterpart to John Bull. She is therefore doing something to the symbol of Englishness that is more sophisticated than the mere domination or exploitation of it that Schmid implies. Rather, Iona is inverting the patriarchal order both of literal political power and of symbolic political iconography, even if she is replacing it with a new but comparable form of tyranny. Gladden summarises *Swellfoot the Tyrant* as a demonstration of the way that tyrants are just as capable of appropriating and exploiting the symbolic instruments of revolution as the revolutionaries are themselves.⁷⁶ This is particularly interesting in the context of Shelley’s use of both swine imagery and the iconography of John Bull, both of which are used in

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Schmid, op. cit., pp. 67-68.

⁷⁶ Gladden, ‘Shelley’s Agenda Writ Large’.

the play as subversive images, but both stem from the establishment. Gladden suggests that although the play uses the image of Queen Caroline as a disruptive, even revolutionary, symbol, Shelley is aware that 'Iona Taurina's transgressive [...] engagements (fail to) reconfigure the political landscape of the play'.⁷⁷ Similarly, the refiguring of John Bull as a subversive figure ultimately results in no change for the multitude, who find themselves taking orders from a new ruler operating under (or rather, on top of) the mandate of the emblem of Theban / British liberty, John Bull. Shelley's point is that this mandate is false: the myth of the freeborn bulls of the past is at best sentimental nostalgia, and at worst, a fantasy of the swinish multitude dreamt up in order to cope with the oppression of the day. The pigs who admire the 'popular and respectable' imagery of John Bull are as confused and gullible as those caught up in the myriad pro-Caroline propaganda and iconography. Ironically, their gullibility mirrors the gullibility that John Bull displays in other satires earlier in the period. In conflating Queen Caroline and John Bull in *Iona Taurina*, Shelley underlines the hollowness of the promises of both icons. That the former embodies the supposedly English characteristics of independent liberty and simple resourcefulness, and that the latter became an emblem for the people's dissatisfaction with George IV, are not sufficient bases from which to deliver the British people from tyranny and oppression. Shelley highlights that, even used as radical symbols as they are in his play, *Iona Taurina* and John Bull remain the tools of tyranny and oppression.

This new form of tyranny demonstrates Shelley's desire to disrupt culturally familiar emblems such as John Bull: in the play, the imagery of John Bull represents a mythic past when all pigs (or bulls, as they supposedly were

⁷⁷ Gladden, 'Shelley's Agenda Writ Large'.

then) were free, independent and noble. However, when the Minotaur returns at the end of the play and Iona leads her revolution, the sentimental feelings the pigs have for Bull iconography is revealed as merely nostalgia for an imagined bygone age. The end of the play is ostensibly positive: led by Iona Taurina, the pigs rise up, overthrow their masters and in doing so revert to their noble forms as Bulls. They return to being natural-born Thebans, imbued with the freedom and dignity of their ancestors. John Bull works in satire as the embodiment of essential British virtues, and Shelley exploits the notion of Bull's essential Britishness by exposing the figure as a tool of state propaganda. John Bull is supposed to embody the typical Englishman, but in the satires that this chapter has examined there are few traits that are consistently represented by Arbuthnot, Gillray, Shelley or others. Shelley's final statement in *Swellfoot* is that the reality of John Bull is ultimately the replacing of one form of tyrannical cultural iconography with another. The multitude have thrown off the shackles of the denomination 'swinish', only to be replaced by the title of 'Bull'. Their leader Swellfoot has been deposed only to be replaced by another, Iona Taurina, who leads the insurrection already in a position of dominance, by riding John Bull. The nostalgia of free bulls is false – Arbuthnot's *John Bull* pamphlets were, broadly, Tory propaganda, and the cult of John Bull in *Swellfoot* is merely an older, idealised form of the tyrannical iconography of the swinish multitude. The swinish multitude are transformed into a herd of John Bulls, but their position in society remains the same, even to the implied extent that they are still farm animals being kept for their meat. The point, Shelley suggests, is not to shake off one form of tyrannical iconography merely to replace it with another, but to disempower that iconography altogether. This is what radical satirists such as Spence attempted by appropriating the phrase swinish multitude, and what

Shelley decisively achieved in 1820, whilst also exposing John Bull as another example of oppressive iconographic imagery.

Shelley's depiction of John Bull is an essential part of his development as a figure in satire, because Shelley achieves what no other satirist does in either the eighteenth or the nineteenth centuries, by revealing the iconography of John Bull as a tool of cultural tyranny. In their preface to Arbuthnot's *John Bull* pamphlets, Bower and Erickson assert that there is a common cultural ownership associated with John Bull which, they posit, stems from the fact that 'almost no-one has read the original political allegory which brought John Bull to life', which has resulted in a sense that John Bull has somehow always existed, and that his origins belong to a mythic past.⁷⁸ Throughout satire, John Bull is the idealised Englishman, and although abused, naive and even stupid, his purpose in satire is as a cipher for the audience. 'John Bull', the reader is told, 'is you'. Shelley responds with the assertion that John Bull is not us, he is a manufactured caricature designed to fix the identity of his readers to a rigid, and ultimately tyrannical, system of iconography, patriotism and political agenda.

⁷⁸ Bower and Erickson, 'Preface' in op. cit., p. vii.

Chapter Three

‘Strutting and crowing’: The Hierarchies of Bird Imagery in Robinson, Dorset and Thelwall

In this chapter I examine how bird imagery and metaphors are used in the period’s satire to comment on both social and political hierarchies, and the relationship between high society and politics. Thomas Paine’s use of bird imagery in his *Rights of Man* is one of the most striking examples of political bird metaphors in the period. In his text, Paine asserts that Burke, in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ‘pities the plumage but forgets the dying bird’.¹ What matters to Burke is not the creature itself, but its superficially beautiful feathers. Similarly, in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft imagines a ‘lady who sheds tears for the bird starved in a snare’, but will at the same time ‘keep her coachman and horses whole hours waiting for her, when the sharp frost bites’.² Wollstonecraft blames ‘the selfish vanity of beauty’ as the cause for her lady’s capricious sympathies.³ Although Wollstonecraft does not attack Burke directly here, her remarks on the ‘habitual cruelty’ of society,⁴ and use of the image of the ‘bird starved in a snare’, follow directly on from her *Vindication of the Rights of Men*, in which she attacks Burke for his unfettered ‘respect for rank’, which has ‘swallowed up the common feelings of humanity’.⁵ Wollstonecraft suggests that Burke is so overwhelmed by his love of rank, titles and the other superficial trappings of political and social authority, that he has forgotten his common, unvarnished humanity. Burke himself uses bird imagery

¹ Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man* (London: Penguin Classics, 1985), p. 51.

² Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1997), p. 316.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 317.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

⁵ Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1997), p. 47.

when he attacks the Revolutionaries for tearing down the veil of respectability clothing the aristocracy and landownership, whilst retaining the alleged evils of that system for the benefit of the new regime:

As there are now no hereditary honours, and no distinguished families, why are we taxed to maintain what you tell us ought not to exist? You have sent down our old aristocratic landlords in no other character, and with no other title, but that of exactors under your authority. Have you endeavoured to make these your rent-gatherers respectable to us? No. You have sent to us [...] displumed, degraded and metamorphosed, such unfeathered two-legged things, that we no longer know them.⁶

There is an implicit repulsion at the naked vulgarity of the situation: Burke argues that the Revolutionaries have abolished the form of aristocracy but retained the alleged evil of taxation, making it that much more unsavoury by stripping it of any visible authority. John Barrell has noted Paine's and Wollstonecraft's criticisms of Burke's imagination as susceptible to being 'dazzled by images of gaudy splendour'.⁷ Barrell posits that 'it is this, as much as his hostility to innovation [...] which is taken to account for his slavish loyalty to kings and to the Established Church', noting that

it is this propensity [to be dazzled] which ensures that Burke's imagination, confronted with the sufferings of those that *regime* oppressed and of those responsible for the oppression, 'pities the plumage, but forgets the dying bird'. Only the sufferings of royalty, claims Macaulay, are 'calculated to draw forth *all* the energies of his imagination'.⁸

Burke's sympathy with 'the sufferings of royalty are evident in his own language: phrases such as 'forced to abandon the sanctuary [...] which they left

⁶ Burke, op. cit., p. 393.

⁷ John Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide 1793-1796* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 14.

⁸ Ibid.

swimming in blood, polluted by massacre, and strewn with scattered limbs and mutilated carcasses', is undeniably visceral.⁹

The way that Paine attacks Burke for his purported attraction to the 'plumage' of monarchy is just one example of the close relationship between bird imagery and hierarchies, and bird metaphors in satire are consistently used to construct and analyse social and political authority. For example, where Gifford uses reptile imagery to attack writers he perceives as undermining and corrupting literary and political authority, political satirists such as Daniel Isaac Eaton and John Thelwall, who published 'King Chaunticlere', a short prose satire depicting George III as a tyrannical barnyard cockerel, use bird imagery to suggest that it is the hierarchical structure of authority itself that is corrupt. The follow up to 'King Chaunticlere', written by Thelwall, and entitled *John Gilpin's Ghost*, addresses the battle for supremacy between the establishment and the popular radical presses. In contrast, poets such as Mary Robinson and Catherine Ann Dorset use bird imagery to satirise the ties between politics and high society, particularly with regard to the Whigs.

The discussion in this chapter is divided into three sections. The first analyses Robinson's use of bird imagery in her 1791 poem *To The Muse of Poetry*, which although not overtly satiric, addresses some of the key themes and imagery that satirists utilise when they use bird metaphors. Furthermore, *To The Muse of Poetry* espouses rather a conservative politics of poetry, and it is extremely useful to foreground later political satires with a discussion of this poem. The second section begins by examining Robinson's satire, *Modern Manners*, which as well as bird imagery, uses insect and reptile metaphors, discussed below in chapter four, before moving on to discuss *The Peacock* "At

⁹ Burke, op. cit, p. 233.

Home”, by Catherine Ann Dorset, ostensibly a children’s poem, but one that ridicules the high ritualisation and formalisation of social events. Finally, the third section considers the way radicals used bird imagery to comment on emergent radical print culture, with the satires ‘King Chaunticlere’ and *John Gilpin’s Ghost*.

1.1 ‘Rinaldo’s glorious lay’: Bird Imagery and Literary Tradition in Robinson’s *To The Muse of Poetry*

An example of the way bird imagery is typically used to construct hierarchies is in Robinson’s 1791 poem *To the Muse of Poetry*. Although *To the Muse of Poetry* is not satiric, it foregrounds not only Robinson’s use of bird imagery in her later, satirical works, but also her critique on fashionable society and transience that comes to fruition in *Modern Manners*. In *To the Muse of Poetry* she invokes her muse to see

Each envious, waspish, jealous thing,
Around its harmless venom fling,
And dart its powerless fangs at THEE!¹⁰

Where *To the Muse of Poetry* is still very much in the Della Cruscan mode – sensual, and directly addressing another poet – *Modern Manners* is Robinson’s attempt to distance herself from this style of writing. Hester Davenport posits that it was in the ‘last decade of her life’ that Robinson ‘sought to reinvent herself as a serious writer’,¹¹ and the attack on the fashionable society she had until recently been part of is a clear indication of this. However, Robinson’s

¹⁰ Mary Robinson, *To the Muse of Poetry*, in John Strachan, *British Satire 1785-1840, Volume 4, Gifford and the Della Cruscans* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003), p. 261, ll. 1-4, hereafter referred to as *BS* vol. 4.

¹¹ Hester Davenport, *The Prince’s Mistress: A Life of Mary Robinson* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2004), p. 164.

swipe at critics of her poetry is already present in *To the Muse of Poetry* – just as in *Modern Manners*, Robinson is attacking critics as envious, ‘waspy’ creatures. The difference is that in the earlier poem, she defends her ‘muse’, rather than directly defending herself. Furthermore, in *Modern Manners* Robinson uses bird imagery to ridicule fashionable women, but in *To the Muse of Poetry* she uses it to exalt the twin subjects of her muse and the object of her desire, Rinaldo, who represents her fellow Della Cruscan poet, Robert Merry. She continues to speak to her muse:

Ne’er shalt THOU bend thy radiant wing,
To sweep the dark revengeful string;
Or meanly stoop, to steal a ray,
E’en from RINALDO’S glorious lay,
Tho’ his transcendent Verse should twine
About thy heart, each bliss divine.¹²

Robinson characterises her muse here as a ‘radiant’, winged being, soaring above the petty jealousies of the ‘waspy’ things of the preceding lines. This aggrandisement of the exquisite beauty of her muse is one of the things that Robinson would later satirise in *Modern Manners*, when she ridicules the society ladies for their obsession with fashion. Where *To the Muse of Poetry* is neither specifically political nor satirical, Robinson’s later ridiculing of the self-importance of high-society ladies is tied to the Whigs that pervaded high society.

To the Muse of Poetry is important to this study as it provides a backdrop to Robinson’s later critique of fashionable society, but one in which she used an almost identical vocabulary of imagery to do so.

¹² Robinson, op. cit., ll. 5-10.

The muse is pure inspiration, not needing to borrow other writers' 'transcendent verses' as its own wings of inspiration are enough to carry it. She opens the second stanza:

O MUSE ADOR'D, I woo thee now
From yon bright Heaven, to hear my vow;
From thy blest wing a plume I'll steal,
And with its burning point record
Each firm indissoluble word,
And with my lips the proud oath seal!¹³

Each plume of the wings of her muse is a quill that Robinson uses to write, invested with such radiance that their points are 'burning'. There is a conscious circularity to Robinson's invocation – she 'steals' a plume from her muse in order to write an ode back to it on its own brilliance, increasing the sense of its own magnificence as ironically she strips it of the plumage that made it beautiful to begin with. Robinson is suggesting that good writers must not recklessly plunder their own muses, but rather, be economical with their 'plumage': a kind of admission that inspiration is not unlimited. Indeed, in stanza three the poet claims that

I ask not fierce terrific strain,
That rends the breast with tort'ring pain,
No frantic flight, no labour'd art,
To wring the fibres of the heart!
[...]
Ne'er shall MY hand, at Night's full noon,
Snatch from the tresses of the moon
A sparkling crown of silvr'y hue,
Besprent with studs of frozen dew,
To deck my brow with borrow'd rays,
That feebly imitate the SUN'S RICH BLAZE.¹⁴

¹³Robinson, op. cit., ll. 11-16.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 262, ll. 41-58.

Robinson petitions her muse for natural, fluid inspiration instead of ‘labour’d art’ that would ‘rend the breast with tort’ring pain’. Moreover, Robinson’s vow to never ‘Snatch the tresses of the moon’ in a futile attempt to imitate the sun suggests that she is aware of her own poetic limitations, and foregrounds the sun metaphor she uses in *Modern Manners*, when she compares Pope’s poetic radiance to the modern buzzing, insect-like satirists. However, Robinson’s sense of modesty in this stanza is at odds with much of the other imagery elsewhere in the poem. As she writes, for example, of ‘souls like mine [that] / Beam with poetic rays divine’,¹⁵ Robinson is in egotistical rapture, congratulating her muse and herself on their brilliant poetic splendour.

In a similar way that Robinson invokes Pope in her *Modern Manners*, in *To The Muse of Poetry* she recalls an earlier poetic tradition. That she calls Merry ‘Rinaldo’ points to Torquato Tasso’s 1581 *Jerusalem Delivered*, in which Rinaldo is a crusading knight fighting to return Jerusalem to Christendom.¹⁶ Indeed, in evoking Tasso’s poetry, Robinson consciously courts a tradition set down by writers such as Tasso, and also Ludovico Ariosto and Edmund Spenser.¹⁷ While Robinson praises ‘classic taste’, the imagery in her plea to the muse to ‘lead ME not, dear gentle Maid, / To poison’d bow’r or haunted glade; / Where beck’ning spectres shrieking, glare / Along the black infected air’, could have been plucked straight from *The Faerie Queene*.¹⁸ It is interesting that where

¹⁵ Robinson, op. cit., p. 261, ll. 17-18.

¹⁶ Torquato Tasso, *Jerusalem Delivered: An Heroic Poem*, 2 vols., vol. 1, eighth edition, trans. John Hoole (London: J. Johnson, 1803).

¹⁷ See Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso* ed. and trans. Guido Waldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), and Edmund Spenser, *Poetical Works*, eds. J.C. Smith and E. de Selincourt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

¹⁸ Robinson, op. cit., p. 262, l. 36 and ll. 61-63. The acknowledgment of Spenser’s influence on Romantic-era writing is not new: see Walter Jackson Bate, *John Keats* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 11, 32-33, 36, 49, 61-63, 85, 141, 162, 176-177, 441, and 478, and Robert Gittings, *John Keats*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), pp. 68, 77, 110, 137, 210, 220, 417, 443, 444, 526, and 583-4 for Spenser’s influence on Keats; Harold Bloom, *Shelley’s Mythmaking* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), pp. 60, 73, 76, 82, 92, 95, 115, 117, 124,

Gifford attacked the Della Cruscan writers for corrupting literature, Robinson positions her poetry as a link in an unbroken chain of literary tradition, whether allying herself to Pope, or recalling the chaste courtly love in Renaissance epic poetry. This seems to directly oppose Gifford's claim that the Della Cruscans were subverting literary conventions with the new styles of poetry. However, as I argue in chapter four, Gifford's real motivations were political, and Robinson and Merry's radical politics were in opposition to Gifford's conservatism. Moreover, Gifford's claim that Robinson and the other Della Cruscans' writing represented a dangerously revolutionary politics of poetry is somewhat diminished by the fact that *To the Muse of Poetry* is a conscious invocation of English and Italian literary traditions. Indeed, in this respect, and in terms of form, *To the Muse of Poetry* is quite a conservative poem, celebrating, rather than rejecting literary convention. Even the title recalls a classical tradition in verse of invoking one's muse, and Robinson's characterisation of her muse as a beautiful, bird-like being, and the Spenser-esque language that she uses pays tribute to the authority of past literature. Later, in *Modern Manners*, Robinson would advocate a more radical politics, and a more contemporary approach to literature, but in respect of *To the Muse of Poetry*, Gifford's attacks on Robinson as a corrupting force in English literature were largely unfounded.

In the final two stanzas of her poem, Robinson returns to Rinaldo, asking that

when DIVINE RINALDO flings

160, 163, 164, 169, 174, 177-180, 182, 195-196, 199, 202, 210, 222, 226, 236, and 242 for Spenser in Shelley and Blake; Greg Kucich, *Keats, Shelley, and Romantic Spenserianism* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), for a focussed analysis on Spenser's influence on the Romantic period. See also A. C. Hamilton (ed.), *The Spenser Encyclopedia* (London: University of Toronto Press, 1997), for short essays on Spenser's influence on the major male Romantic writers.

Soft rapture o'er the bounding strings;
When the bright flame that fills HIS soul,
Bursts thro' the bonds of calm controul,
And on enthusiastic wings
To Heaven's Eternal Mansion springs
[...]
Forbear his glorious flight to bind;
YET o'er his TRUE POETIC Mind
Expand thy chaste celestial ray¹⁹

Robinson prays to her muse to guide Rinaldo as he ascends the skies of poetry. She asks that his 'flight' is not bound, but that his 'poetic mind' is not led astray. When Robinson describes Rinaldo bursting 'thro' the bonds of calm controul', she invokes not only the image of Icarus flying ambitiously close to the sun and destroying himself, but also of death, as Rinaldo's soul ascends to heaven on angelic wings, leaving behind the bodily 'bonds of calm controul'. That Rinaldo's wings are angelic, rather than avian, is clear, but the imagery of flight and beauty resonate both with Rinaldo as a winged spirit, and the bird-plumage of Robinson's muse. Moreover, Robinson's depiction of death as the soul's release from the confines of the body into the freedom of flight and pure poetry are reminiscent of the phoenix, a mythical bird that perpetually dies and is reborn in flames. The suggestion of Rinaldo's death is repeated from earlier in the poem, where Robinson promises to her muse that:

N'er will I quit the burning eye,
'Till my last, eager, gasping sigh,
Shall, from its earthly mansion flown,
Embrace THEE on thy STARRY THRONE.²⁰

Here the connotations with death are clear, with Robinson foreseeing her 'last, eager, gasping sigh', and figuring her body as an 'earthly mansion', a metaphor

¹⁹Robinson, op. cit., p. 263, ll. 91-101.

²⁰Ibid., p. 261, ll. 29-32.

that she repeats in her description of Rinaldo's ascent to 'Heaven's Eternal Mansion'. The juxtaposition between the 'earthly mansion' and 'starry throne' further reinforces the sense of hierarchy between Robinson's poetry and the authoritative voice of the literary past. However, the reader is left in no doubt that Robinson is on her way to joining the 'Eternal Mansion' of poetic posterity, whereas Rinaldo has yet to earn himself his place.

That Robinson's future death precedes Rinaldo's in the poem is important in establishing a sense of hierarchy between them. Robinson spends two stanzas describing the potential trials her poetic soul will face as it ascends to heaven, pleading with her muse to 'lead [her] not, dear gentle Maid, / To poison'd bow'r or haunted glade'.²¹ Rinaldo's death, however, is dealt with quickly in only one stanza, and only after Robinson has finished with the excitement of imagining her own, poetic ascension. Robinson sues to her muse for protection against a place 'Where beck'ning spectres shrieking, glare / Along the black infected air'²², in a fairly conventional depiction of a dangerous journey. Robinson envisions herself beset by dangers on her quest towards poetic transcendence. Despite this being a spiritual voyage, the dangers centre on physical hazards, for example, infected air, thunder and lightning, and stormy oceans. This is important because in setting up these physical objects Robinson never brings in to question her own ability as a poet – these obstacles present a threat merely to her onward journey. In contrast, Rinaldo's poetic integrity is exactly what Robinson questions when she describes his voyage to heaven:

[Do not] let fantastic fires diffuse
Deluding lustre round HIS MUSE,

²¹Robinson, op. cit., p. 262, ll. 59-60.

²²Ibid., ll. 61-62.

To lead HER glorious steps astray!²³

Where Robinson's journey is merely at risk of being hindered by physical obstacles, Rinaldo and his muse are susceptible to delusion and to being led 'astray' from true poetic transcendence. Robinson therefore elevates her own poetic talents above those of Rinaldo, and more importantly, places the inspirational brilliance of her own muse above Rinaldo's. Robinson uses the imagery of birds, or more specifically, of flight and wings to create a hierarchy between herself and the poet that she is ostensibly praising – she is saying, effectively, that the plumage of her muse is brighter and capable of flying closer to the 'sun's rich blaze' than Rinaldo's.

Robinson ties *To the Muse of Poetry* to a hierarchical tradition of literature rooted in Renaissance epic poetry, and in doing so, creates an internal order, placing (or perching) herself at the top of a hierarchy based on poetic ability. Robinson assumes the mantle of Pope in *Modern Manners*, and here, she instructs 'Rinaldo' on romantic verse, speaking both to her addressee, Merry, and to the poetry from which she has borrowed the 'Rinaldo' figure. Robinson creates her own poetic hegemony by using bird, plumage and flight imagery whilst invoking a chain of literary tradition moving forward in her. Despite poetry that advocated the French Revolution, such as *Ainsi va le Monde*, which was written the year before in 1790, the politics implicit in *To the Muse of Poetry* are fairly moderate, if not conservative.²⁴ *To the Muse of Poetry* does not espouse the usurpation of conventions that Gifford claims characterised Della Cruscan poetry, but instead is an homage to literary tradition, and invokes a return to an earlier, more chaste style of romantic writing.

²³ Robinson, op. cit., p. 263, ll. 102-104.

²⁴ 'Laura Maria' (Mary Robinson), *Ainsi va le Monde*, in *BS vol. 4*.

1.2 ‘Thrice feather’d belles’: Fashion and Power in Robinson’s *Modern Manners* and Dorset’s *The Peacock “At Home”*

If, after advocating revolution in *Ainsi va le Monde*, Robinson uses bird imagery in *To The Muse of Poetry* to present a surprisingly conservative politics of poetry, she then uses bird metaphors in the 1793 *Modern Manners* to reject both the French Revolution and the hypocrisy of fashionable Whig society. The hierarchy that Robinson suggests between herself and Merry as ‘Rinaldo’ in *To the Muse of Poetry* is echoed in *Modern Manners*. Robinson advises that

reflection tell the busy jade,
That popularity will sometimes fade:
Fashion who made her, can again unmake;
The fondest lovers, - will their loves forsake!
Mountains have mov’d, as learned trav’llers say,
And lordly *Eagles*, - stoop’d to *geese* for prey,²⁵

The poet presents the image of eagles as ‘lordly’, but warns that the illusion of dominance is easily exposed – ‘popularity will sometimes fade’. The eagle must ‘stoop’ to the goose to feed itself, reinforcing the notion that social hierarchies exist everywhere, but that the eagle stoops suggests that these hierarchies are as unstable as they are ubiquitous. This has echoes in Robinson’s real life. She had been herself a member of the fashionable elite and had a brief career as an actress, and when the Prince Regent saw her in the *Winter’s Tale* he began a correspondence with her that turned into a public affair. Paula Byrne notes that as the Prince’s new mistress, ‘Mary was soon to become the most talked about woman of the day’, but that ‘It always irked her that she achieved her greatest fame not as an actress or woman of letters, but – the word was current then as

²⁵ ‘Horace Juvenal’ (Mary Robinson), *Modern Manners. A Poem. In Two Cantos*, in *BS* vol. 4, p. 95, ll. 133-138.

well as now – as a celebrity’.²⁶ However, the Prince sent her an abrupt letter in late 1780 informing her that ‘we must meet no more’, and their affair was effectively over.²⁷ Predictably, the Prince’s affections had moved elsewhere, leaving Robinson in £7,000 of debt and an acting career which was finished.²⁸ Robinson still had public supporters,²⁹ but when Prince George abandoned her as his mistress the death-knell of her tenure in the world of fashion and celebrity was sounded.

This moment in Robinson’s life directly affects *Modern Manners*, which she writes from the perspective of an outside observer who yet possesses an intimate knowledge of the workings of high society. In the second canto of her poem, Robinson figures fashionable society as a jostling crowd that watch a midnight fox hunt:

The chase! not like the common stile of things,
Such as are made for *sportsmen*, - and for *kings*;
But where, in rows, “thrice feather’d” *belles* resort,
With waxen tapers to illumine the sport!³⁰

²⁶ Paula Byrne, *Perdita: The Life of Mary Robinson* (London: Harper Perennial, 2004), pp. 129-130.

²⁷ Cited in *ibid.*, p. 139.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 144, and Strachan, ‘Biographical Directory’ in *BS vol. 4*, p. xxxiv.

²⁹ See Byrne, pp. 158-159: ‘Although Perdita was no longer Florizel’s beloved, she had a panache that none of her rivals could match. The only option for the courtesans was to join forces. But when they did, there would always be a crowd of supporters ready to come to Mary’s aid’.

³⁰ Robinson, *Modern Manners*, p. 101, ll. 33-36. Robinson’s use of the term ‘thrice feather’d’ is allusive: first appearing in George Colman’s prologue to David Garrick’s 1775 farcical play, ‘BON TON; OR, *High Life above Stairs. A COMEDY. IN TWO ACTS. AS IT IS PERFORMED AT THE THEATRE ROYAL, IN DRURY-LANE*’ (London: T. Becket, 1775), in the fourth stanza:

Vulgar! cries Miss. Observe in *higher* life
The feather’d spinster, and thrice-feather’d wife!
The Club’s Bon Ton. Bon Ton’s a constant trade
Of rout, Festino, Ball and Masquerade!
‘Tis plays and puppet-shews; ‘tis something new!
‘Tis losing thousands ev’ry night at lu!

The ladies, depicted here as ‘thrice-feather’d belles’ flock with their lit tapers to watch a fox-hunt, held bizarrely at midnight. The phrase ‘thrice-feather’d’ not only suggests frivolity, but is also very closely associated with both the Prince of Wales – the three feathers was the Prince’s heraldic badge – and by extension, the Whigs, whom the Prince Regent supported. Moreover, Robinson’s phrase recalls the elaborate feathered headdresses of the Duchess of Devonshire, Georgiana Cavendish, who was the period’s supreme Whig society belle. As the audience watch this unusual event

Reynard [the fox] hears, *on boards*, the death-wing’d hoof,
And flies to cover, - ‘neath a *canvas roof*,
Where city crops, and booted bucks repair,
To elbow, ogle, see the world, - and swear!³¹

Robinson links the society ‘belles’ and the horse and rider in the fox-hunt by associating them both with feathers and wings. Although she seems to juxtapose the frivolousness of the ‘thrice feather’d’ onlookers with the ominous image of the ‘death-wing’d hoof’, Robinson’s judgement of both is ultimately the same. The jostling men and women have come out ostensibly to see the display of the fox hunt, but it is obvious that their real intent is to display themselves: the ‘booted bucks’ appear to have come to ‘see the world, - and swear’, but they are really there to *be* seen, as are the belles, displaying themselves with their ornamental feathers. Moreover, the obscurity of the hunt being held at night is clearer when we consider the whole event as an elaborate courtship. It is ironic, however, that in birds it is the male who uses gaudy feathers in courtship, but in her poem Robinson associates this with the chattering ladies of fashion. The men, in contrast, are depicted as stereotypically masculine animals: ‘bucks’,

³¹ Robinson, *Modern Manners*, ll. 37-41.

elbowing each other to ‘ogle’ the women. Nevertheless, in this scene of mass courtship, both sexes are there to see and be seen, but their attention is divided between ogling each other and watching the fox-hunt. That it is at night, and that the crowd is watching what appears to be only one horse in the hunt marks it out as unusual, carnivalesque even, and underscores that this scene is a performance. Furthermore, the fox hears the horse’s tread ‘*on boards*’, as if the chase is actually being performed on a stage, and Robinson’s italicisation draws particular attention to this phrase, highlighting further, as if it needed to be, the significance of performativity in this scene. Both the menacing image of the ‘death-wing’d hoof’ and the silliness of the feather’d society belles are part of the same display, the same act of performance, combining to create the excitement and tension that characterize courtship. Moreover, in representing courtship in society as a performance, Robinson is commenting on the inherent falsity of it, and by tying the event to a fox-hunt, she strips away the ‘thrice-feather’d’ prettiness and frivolity of fashionable courting as something that is often ugly, animalistic and even ruthlessly violent.

In the second canto, Robinson explicitly links ‘Preposterous Fashion’³² to politics and the French Revolution. She marvels at:

Fashion, first hatch’d in courts, in cities bred,
 Now skims exulting o’er each *natural* head
 Of native beauty she usurps the place,
 Gives youth to C-d! – to H-t grace!
 Contemns the graceful tenderness that lies
 In Devon’s heart! and steals through Devon’s eyes,
 Who doats on foreign politics, and ways,
 Who keeps *French* company, and reads *French* plays³³

³² Robinson, *Modern Manners*, p. 103, l. 109.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 104, ll. 133-140.

Robinson links fashionable society and political life, representing fashion as a wig³⁴ that ‘skims’ over ‘each *natural* head’, usurping ‘native beauty’, and giving false youth to figures like ‘H-t’, whom Strachan identifies as Isabella, Lady Hertford, a society hostess.³⁵ Importantly, Robinson characterises fashion as being ‘hatch’d’, as if from an egg, in courts, which now permeates high society.

‘Devon’ is a reference to Georgiana, the Duchess of Devonshire,³⁶ rather than her husband, the Duke of Devonshire. That it is the Duchess whom Robinson refers to as ‘Devon’ signifies just how important she was in the conjoined worlds of society and politics. Moreover, the Duchess is the supreme example of the ‘thrice feather’d belles’ *Modern Manners* is critiquing because for Robinson, Georgiana’s ‘doating’ on foreign politics reduces the seriousness of the French Revolution and Terror into fashionable affectation; an activity to be performed alongside keeping ‘French company’ and enjoying ‘French plays’.

However, to dismiss Georgiana as merely another squawking fashionable belle is to seriously underestimate both her influence on politics and high society, and her significance as an emblem of the inextricable relationship between Whig society and politics. The Duchess, Georgiana Cavendish, was an icon of late-eighteenth century fashionable society and came from a Whig family, as did her husband, William Cavendish. In her biography of Georgiana, Amanda Foreman describes the Duchess as ‘tall, arresting, sexually attractive and extremely stylish. Indeed, the newspapers dubbed her the “Empress of Fashion”’.³⁷ This unofficial title is clearly significant – fashion is styled here as a form of politics, represented as a state that can be ruled over by an ‘Empress’. The world of

³⁴ Robinson, *Modern Manners*, p. 104, l. 126.

³⁵ Strachan, *BS vol. 4*, p. 360, 61 n.

³⁶ Also identified by Strachan in *ibid.*, 62 n.

³⁷ Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana: Duchess of Devonshire* (London: HarperCollins, 1999), p. 3.

fashion and high society, in this phrase, presents a model that is echoed in the political world. Moreover, Georgiana had a real, as well as symbolic, political life. When her husband organised a voluntary militia to guard against a French invasion in 1778, Georgiana accompanied him to a camp in Coxheath, and quickly tiring of not being able to do anything, she organised a female auxiliary corps, designing a uniform modified from a male riding coat combined with a dress.³⁸ This is surely the perfect image of the marriage of fashion and politics – Georgiana’s creation of a female corps predictably generated much publicity, with Foreman suggesting that Georgiana’s ‘idea of dressing in patriotic uniforms was a propaganda coup for the Whigs, who had suffered for their opposition to the war [...] Georgiana’s display of military fervour helped to mitigate public hostility towards them and restore the party’s popularity’.³⁹

After returning from Coxheath, Georgiana maintained an active political life, following Parliamentary debates, and hosting balls attended by Whigs such as Charles James Fox. Her fame and effectiveness as a hostess was unrivalled, and she went to great lengths to entertain her high-society guests, enjoying ‘first place in society’.⁴⁰ Her generosity, however, was more than simple altruism – her fame was closely connected with the rise of the Whigs, as Foreman demonstrates:

In December [1782, the *Morning Herald*] stated that ‘her [Georgiana’s] heart [...] appears to be directed by the most liberal principles; and from the benevolence and gentleness which marks her conduct, the voice of compliment becomes the offering of gratitude.’ These fawning notices revealed more than just a weakness for society hostesses. A recent upturn in the Whig party’s fortunes made the paper eager to be associated with the future regime.⁴¹

³⁸ Foreman, op. cit., pp. 63-65.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 65.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 117.

⁴¹ Ibid., 91.

Georgiana's intimate relationship with the Whig party provided a link between parliamentary politics and high-society gossip in the papers. It is exactly this relationship that Robinson highlights in *Modern Manners*.

Robinson's association of fashionable political society with bird imagery is not unique, nor is it limited to satirical literature aimed at an adult audience. For example, *The Peacock "At Home"*, is an Horatian social satire that uses anthropomorphised birds as its characters. The poem was written by Catherine Ann Dorset in 1809, but was published anonymously, and is a parody of an 1807 children's poem by William Roscoe, entitled *The Butterfly's Ball*.⁴² *The Peacock "At Home"* positions itself as a parodic sequel to *The Butterfly's Ball* where the peacock has heard of the insects' party from Roscoe's poem, and growing jealous, decides to host his own for the world's birds. Donelle R. Ruwe describes the poem as 'a narrative with the type of social satire found in Jane Austen's comedy of manners'.⁴³ Indeed, *The Peacock "At Home"* is primarily a social satire, but one that focuses on the kind of society that characterised the lives of high profile Whigs such as the Duchess of Devonshire.

Even the title is politically suggestive: that the peacock is 'at home' is significant in itself. Ostensibly it suggests a private space, but in reality, being 'At Home', in the context of the Peacock's party, is very much a public arena, whereby the Peacock is scrutinised and judged. This is in juxtaposition to the sense of domestic hierarchy, or ownership that the title also suggests – the peacock is in *his* home, and all the other characters are *his* guests. The peacock's hospitality is really a reminder of his dominance and symbolic ownership over

⁴² Ruwe, op. cit., p. 121. Ruwe also points out that because *The Peacock "At Home"* was published anonymously, attributing the authorship correctly has been problematic, and is a 'persistent problem for scholars' of children's literature (p. 134, 12n.).

⁴³ Ibid., p. 122.

the other birds. The inverted commas of “*At Home*” draw attention to the phrase, formalising what would otherwise be a banal detail. Eric Hobsbawm claims that ‘Nothing appears more ancient, and linked to an immemorial past, than the pageantry which surrounds British monarchy in its public manifestations’.⁴⁴ *The Peacock* “*At Home*” is not a satire on monarchy, but Hobsbawm’s observation is still useful in the context of the formalisation and ritualisation of ‘at home’ in the poem’s title. That “*At Home*” is presented as a quotation suggests that it has been drawn from an earlier source, giving it a ‘past’. Additionally, that the private ‘home’ is juxtaposed with the public nature of the peacock’s party, and that the ‘home’ is literally publicised in the title, has parallels with Hobsbawm’s comment on the ‘British monarchy in its public manifestations’, and the subsequent construction of a ritualised past. ‘Inventing traditions’, Hobsbawm posits, ‘is essentially a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition’.⁴⁵ What is being invented in Dorset’s poem is a formalised version of a domestic space, where ostensibly informal social events mask a ritual that establishes a hierarchy.

Rodney Barker has commented on similar processes in his study of the self-legitimation of rulers.⁴⁶ Barker uses the example of the White House criticising the perception of it as an approachable, American home:

the White House is clearly far more ‘exalted’ than the average American home, and significantly less approachable. The citizens of the United States may visit and be impressed by the White House once or even several times in a lifetime,

⁴⁴ Eric Hobsbawm, ‘Introduction: Inventing Traditions’, in Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 1-14, here p. 1.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁴⁶ Rodney Barker, *Legitimizing Identities: The Self-Presentations of Rulers and Subjects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

but the president can be impressed by it, and what it says about the incumbent of the presidential office, every day.⁴⁷

The significance of the White House's grandeur is just as much for the President as it is for his visitors: to impress on him as much as anyone his mandate to rule and to occupy that space. Similarly, the eponymous ball of Dorset's poem serves the double function of reassuring both the guests and the Peacock of his self-asserted supremacy over the other birds.

In *The Whig World*, Mitchell comments that for Whigs in the eighteenth century,

much of West End life depended on display, and public and private spaces in which this was possible proliferated. To live in a square was more convenient than to live in a street, because it allowed an unrestricted view of all one's neighbours. Equally, parks, theatres, balls and clubs were parade grounds where calling attention to oneself was a positive virtue.⁴⁸

The parallels between the pageantry of the 'At Home' of Dorset's poem, and the importance of display in London Whig society are clear. Moreover, both Dorset's title, and the importance of display in Whig society that it suggests are inherently political because they establish the concept of difference: difference between the ritualised and the banal – the difference between the formalised act of being 'At Home', and simply, literally being at home. It establishes the difference between those inside and outside of the club – the insiders, implicitly, are the only ones who can be 'At Home', and moreover, understand its ritualised and symbolic meanings. In Dorset's poem, this difference is characterised by the birds, who understand the code, and the other animals, who do not. Furthermore, that Dorset depicts her characters as birds, unidentifiable as specific public

⁴⁷ Barker, op. cit., p 49.

⁴⁸ Mitchell, op. cit., p. 40.

figures or politicians, echoes the way that Whigs used esoteric nicknames to identify each other in letters and conversation: Charles Fox, for example was known fittingly as ‘The Eyebrow’, whereas the Duchess of Devonshire was ‘The Rat’. Without insider knowledge of these pseudonyms, identifying the subjects would be extremely difficult or impossible.⁴⁹ The title’s juxtaposition of public and private spaces forms an inversion of the custom of ‘coming out’ practised by young society belles in their first public appearance. Importantly, this was a significant portion of fashionable Whig society life. Mitchell discusses the importance of the ‘Season’ for fashionable town Whigs, claiming that

Nearly every [Whig] family of standing took part in it, and to choose not to do so was thought eccentric. For to miss the Season was to involve the family in loss. Girls who were denied the Season, and a well-appointed ‘coming out’, lost the opportunities of the vigorous marriage market that was such an important aspect of the arrangement, and might have to settle for a curate.⁵⁰

This is the effect of Hobsbawm’s ritualised pageantry, where elaborate customs are invented, not to include people in a formalised community, but to divide the ‘insiders’ from the ‘outsiders’. Moreover, as Mitchell states,

The fact that the Whigs were so closely associated with London therefore carried real consequences for their party. It was the more respected or feared because of its associations with the capital.⁵¹

Whig society extended beyond party politics, but was never separated from it and both the social and political aspects of Whiggery were mutually dependent.

Although *The Peacock “At Home”* presents itself as a children’s poem, it is much lengthier and arguably more sophisticated than the poem it parodies, *The*

⁴⁹ Mitchell, op. cit., p. 25.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 40.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 43.

Butterfly's Ball, and is intended for a dual readership of children and adults. This last assessment has also been made of *The Butterfly's Ball*. Ruwe, discussing the illustrations that accompany the poem, notes that in one illustration,

The female snail carries her shell on her head but seems to be collapsing under its weight [...] One could argue that a woman carrying a winding baggage (the shell) on her head, a black beetle carrying others on his back, and a reference to domestic honey (rather than imported sugar) suggest anti-slavery sentiments. Certainly Roscoe was an active abolitionist who published *The Wrongs of Africa* in 1788.⁵²

Ruwe contrasts this observation with the fact that *The Butterfly's Ball* first appeared in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 'a conservative journal stridently opposed to the 1790s campaign for political reform', but that John Harris, the publisher of the children's books the poem was printed in, also published 'radical and satirical writings'. Ruwe concludes that 'The politics of *The Butterfly's Ball* remain unclear'.⁵³ However, it is clear that the political comment that *The Peacock "At Home"* makes is focussed specifically on the fact that eighteenth-century party politics, particularly Whig politics, were inextricably linked to fashionable society. Dorset presents a poetic model of politics, consisting of 'petty jealousies, a mix of low and high diction and social cant',⁵⁴ and which posits that the social structures satirised in *The Peacock "At Home"* are essentially political.

Moreover, that *The Peacock "At Home"* comes after *The Butterfly's Ball* as a parodic sequel increases its complexity, allowing us to read *The Peacock "At Home"* against its progenitor, rather than as an entirely unique text. A major difference between the poems, and one that marks out Dorset's text as more

⁵² Ruwe, op. cit., p. 116.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 132, 3n.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 122.

mature is that *The Peacock "At Home"* is invested with a sense of conflict that *The Butterfly's Ball* is not. For example, Roscoe's poem opens with the stanza,

Come take up your Hats, and away let us haste
To the *Butterfly's Ball*, and the *Grasshopper's Feast*.
The Trumpeter, *Gad-fly*, has summon'd the Crew,
And the Revels are now only waiting for you.⁵⁵

These lines are a friendly invitation to the eponymous ball, which is, significantly, not exclusive: the second-person narration of these opening lines is a direct invitation to the reader to join in the revelries, and in the second stanza, when the speaker is revealed to be 'little Robert', a human boy, the ball appears not to be species-specific, either: humans and insects are just as welcome to participate.⁵⁶ This warm, happy opening is in stark contrast to the first stanza of *The Peacock "At Home"*:

When the Butterfly burst from her chrysalis state,
And gave to the Insects a Ball and a Fête;
[...]
The fame spread abroad of their revels and feasts,
And excited the spleen of the birds and the beasts;
For the gilded-wing'd Dragon-Fly made it his theme,
And the Gnat blew his horn as he danc'd in the beam;
[...]
It was humm'd by the Beetle , and buzz'd by the Fly ,
And sung by the myriads that sport thro' the sky.
The quadrupeds listen'd in sullen displeasure;
But the tenants of air were enrag'd beyond measure.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ William Roscoe, *The Butterfly's Ball, and the Grasshopper's Feast* (London: J Harris, 1807), ll. 1-4. This extract is taken from the 1808 edition of the poem, available at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/20860/20860-h/20860-h.htm> (Accessed: 24 March 2010).

⁵⁶ Ibid., l. 5.

⁵⁷ Catherine Ann Dorset, *The Peacock "At Home"*, in *The Peacock "At Home" And Other Poems* (London: J Harris, 1809), pp. 3-4 ll. 1-16. Available at <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk/> (Accessed: 24 March 2010). As Ruwe points out, the poem is wrongly attributed to Dorset's sister, Charlotte Turner Smith. All further references to Dorset's poem will be to this edition unless otherwise stated.

Here, Dorset rewrites the events of *The Butterfly's Ball*, to make it appear that it was an exclusive event, where the birds were not invited. This highlights the differences between insects, 'quadrupeds' and 'the tenants of air'. In a rage, the Peacock addresses his fellow birds:

"Ye people of plume!
[...]
Will you suffer the Insects, the birth of a day,
To be talk'd of as all that is tasteful and gay?
And shall we like domestic, inelegant fowls,
Unpolish'd as Geese , and more stupid than Owls,
Sit tamely at home tête-à-tête with our spouses,
While the offspring of grub-worms throw open their houses?
Forbid it, ye powers, o'er our Class who preside,
And help me to humble the Butterfly 's pride!
It provokes me to see such pretenders to fashion,
Cousin Turkey-Cock , well may you quiver with passion!⁵⁸

It is not mirth or friendliness that incites the Peacock to host his own ball, but a sense of jealousy and pride. He cannot bear that insects might be considered above birds in 'all that is tasteful and gay', and fears that if he and his fellows allow this travesty to pass they shall become 'domestic, inelegant fowls'. The Peacock's speech establishes the primary motives for the birds to hold their own ball, namely, to re-establish the hierarchy of birds over insects – 'to humble the Butterfly's pride', and to maintain the positive perception of birds in wider society. Here, the social and political are combined as different birds battle to establish a hegemony that is best defined as political.

Dorset establishes the difference between the 'societies' of insects and birds, but only so far as it allows her to create an internal structure and hierarchy to the birds' society, the examination of which forms the majority of her poem. Geese, for example, are 'unpolished', owls are not wise, as we might expect, but

⁵⁸ Dorset, op. cit., p. 5, ll. 19-30.

‘stupid’ (which is true to life – owls are relatively unintelligent birds),⁵⁹ and in contrast, the Eagle is a ‘bird of high rank’.⁶⁰ Additionally,

The Swan calmly sails down the current of life,
Without ruffling a plume in the national strife;
And the Ostrich --- for birds who on iron are wont
Their breakfast to make, can digest an affront.⁶¹

It is in these lines that Dorset explicitly establishes a political structure in the bird’s society – the perceived snub of the insects’ ball is not just a social embarrassment, but, in the eyes of the Peacock, is a ‘national strife’, one to which the Swan, with its unruffled feathers, seems oblivious. Similarly, the Ostrich, with a hardy stomach, is able easily to ‘digest [the] affront’ that the Peacock is unable to ignore. As he concocts his plan for a rival ball, the Peacock becomes more carried away with his own pomposity:

To revenge our disgrace, I’ll for once lead the way,
And send out my cards for St. Valentine’s Day,
Round my standard to rally each order and genus,
From the Eagle of Jove to the Sparrow of Venus.⁶²

The Peacock demands in a ludicrous battle cry that ‘each order and genus’ of the birds ‘rally’ around his ‘standard’. The Peacock is the perfect bird to represent the head of an imaginary state – he envisages his elaborate tail to be his ‘standard’, or flag, and accordingly appoints himself the figurehead, described in one line as ‘The Peacock Imperial, the pride of his race’.⁶³ There are clear echoes here of Paine’s monarchical plumage, but instead of being dazzled by it Dorset presents it as pompous and ridiculous. Beneath the Peacock, there is an

⁵⁹ Dorset, op. cit., p. 5, l. 24.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 6, l. 35.

⁶¹ Ibid., ll. 37-40

⁶² Ibid., ll. 43-46.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 12, l. 111.

aristocracy, with ‘Lord Cassowary’, ‘Sir John Heron’ and ‘Baron Stork’,⁶⁴ and foreign dignitaries such as ‘Don Peroquito’.⁶⁵ There is a military presence in ‘General Flamingo’ and ‘Adm’ral Penguin’,⁶⁶ and even a criminal element with ‘the pilfering daw’, to whom no invitation was sent.⁶⁷ Dorset’s satirical voice is loudest in these sections of the poem, shouting down the pomposity and manufactured exclusivity of fashionable society by presenting images such as ‘The Peacock Imperial’. Through assigning themselves different roles the birds have adopted an artificially constructed grandeur, and it is in this that Dorset ridicules the pomposity of aristocratic eighteenth-century society. Moreover, that the fashionable Whig aristocracy was so integral to the political landscape of the period, Dorset is also therefore critiquing the pomposity of the political system, and the folly that it is allied so closely to such a ridiculous institution as fashionable society.

This creates a multilayered, functioning and importantly, exclusive society, in which some members are disregarded or ignored. The ‘Bantam’, for example, is censured for

strutting and crowing
In those vile pantaloons, which he fancied look’d knowing:
And a want of decorum caus’d many demurs
Against the Game-Chicken, for coming in spurs.⁶⁸

The spurs that the chicken arrives in can be read as an instance of the militarism in the birds’ society. However, given Dorset’s treatment of the other birds, it is easier to read this as another example of pomposity – the chicken’s spurs are not

⁶⁴ Dorset, *op. cit.*, p. 10, l. 83, p. 12, l. 105, and p. 14, l. 131, respectively.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10, l. 84.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 10, l. 84, and p. 14, l. 140, respectively.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12, l. 106.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16, ll. 159-162.

weapons of aggression, but simply an impotent decoration, and moreover, one that it is laughably inappropriate for the occasion. This has a parallel with the 'booted bucks' of Robinson's *Modern Manners*, whose masculine posturing is simply the male counterpart to the feather'd display of the fashionable belles. Additionally, the Bat's admission to the party causes objections for 'the shocking intrusion on people of feather', as the bat is a flying mammal rather than a bird. The guests hope that next time 'Doubtful characters might be excluded at least',⁶⁹ and is further evidence that the Peacock's gathering depends largely on the principle of exclusion. The birds seem to have forgotten that their party was arranged in response to the perceived exclusivity of the Butterfly's ball of Roscoe's text. In a perfect turn of hypocrisy once the birds hold their own ball they turn away creatures, such as the Bat, because they are the wrong species or behave with impropriety.

The birds, and implicitly other species, have their own internal social structures, but they all operate under a wider social umbrella where embarrassments, jealousies and pride can germinate. Furthermore, the Peacock's 'indignant',⁷⁰ invective stems from the feeling of being usurped by the insects, because he supposes that a social hierarchy of birds and insects should be ordered with birds at the top, mirroring their position in the natural food chain. Subsequently, this raises the question of whether the hierarchy that the Peacock's speech implies is natural, social or indeed, political. The similarities between the bird society, and the Whig world would suggest a hierarchy informed by both politics and society. The question of natural or constructed hierarchy is

⁶⁹ Dorset op. cit., p. 17, ll. 165-167.

⁷⁰ Ibid., l. 18.

problematised by Dorset's inclusion of footnotes in a later edition of the poem, listing the real-life traits of the birds featured in the poem. Ruwe suggests that

Perhaps [Dorset] was attempting to make the poem more appealing to adult readers, or perhaps the format of a poetry collection provided greater scope for intellectuality than was available in the circumscribed length of a chapbook.⁷¹

Although the biological notes are interesting for adults to read, they in fact serve a pedagogical purpose, reminding, or at least suggesting to the reader, that the poem is for children.⁷² Indeed, Paula R. Feldman succinctly summarises why the text is effective as both a children's poem and an adult satire, describing it as a

comic narrative poem for children [that] gently satirizes the social foibles of both the aristocracy and the upper middle class as it teaches children about birds.⁷³

However, the diverting, realistic footnotes are at odds with the anthropomorphic characters, who behave socially (in the human sense), rather than naturally.

Mary V. Jackson has noted that 'It is odd that pre-Romantic elements should have found their way into nursery and youthful libraries before neoclassical ones', and that Dorset

⁷¹ Ruwe, op. cit., p. 134, 14n.

⁷² See, for example, p. 8: 'the Halcyon bent over the streamlet to view, / How pretty she look'd, in her boddice of blue'. The accompanying footnote reads,

Halcyon, or Kingfisher. Esteemed the most beautiful of our native birds; but its form is clumsy, and its bill very disproportionate to its size. [...] The ancients relate many fabulous stories of this bird, as that of its laying its eggs in the depth of winter, and that during the time of its incubation the weather remains perfectly calm, whence the expression *Halcyon days*.

This quotation and footnote are cited from the twenty-third edition of the text, available at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/23665/23665-h/23665-h.htm> (Accessed: 24 March 2010).

⁷³ Paula R. Feldman, 'Women Poets and Anonymity in the Romantic Era', in *New Literary History*, 33:2 (Spring 2002), pp. 279-289, here p. 286.

excelled in [...] recreating the delicate aura of the mock epic at its gentlest and airiest. Several of her nursery miniatures rival *The Rape of the Lock* in their delicious yoking of the high and the low, the regal and the ridiculous [...] all held together with the merest whiff of lighthearted mockery at the very human foibles her characters display.⁷⁴

Dorset writes in the soft, gently-mocking Horatian mode of satire, as opposed to the earnest indignation of Juvenalian satire utilised by writers such as William Gifford. She is not harshly critical of the birds' indignant behaviour, but instead gently highlights the silliness of their jealousy.

As the Peacock's invitations are returned, it transpires that several birds, such as the Turkey, the Partridge and the Wheateater are unable to attend. When these birds decline the Peacock's invitation, all for different, personal reasons, the Peacock's imagined dominion over the bird community is somewhat diminished. However, most of the other birds do attend, and the narrator describes the ensuing preparations:

much bustle prevail'd in the Plumed Creation.
Such ruffling of feathers, such pruning of coats,
Such chirping such whistling, such clearing of throats,
Such polishing of bills, and such oiling of pinions,
Had never been known in the biped dominions!⁷⁵

Dorset presents a familiar image of birds here – they are never livelier than when they are preening themselves for display and clearing their throats for song, and are therefore full of affectation and self-conscious pretension. Dorset's anthropomorphic bird society is reminiscent of Robinson's image of 'thrice feather'd belles', and it is easy to imagine those human society beaux pruning themselves in the same way that Dorset's birds do. Indeed, this is Dorset's

⁷⁴ Mary V. Jackson, *Engines of Instruction, Mischief, and Magic: Children's Literature in England from its Beginnings to 1839* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), pp. 208-210.

⁷⁵ Dorset, op. cit., p. 8, ll. 66-70.

central purpose, to ridicule the foppery and obsession with fashion seemingly inherent in high Whig society. The final four lines of *The Peacock "At Home"* affirm this:

Then long live the Peacock, in splendour unmatched,
Whose Ball shall be talk'd of by birds yet unhatch'd;
His fame let the Trumpeter loudly proclaim,
And the Goose lend her quill to transmit it to fame! ⁷⁶

The Peacock's central goals are power and posterity. Hosting a ball is done with the aim of establishing his dominance over the other birds: the birds that are invited are expected to come, and are subsequently complicit in the Peacock's pact of exclusion that bans the jackdaw and other birds from attending. The transmission of the Peacock's fame in the last line of the passage is in reality a synonym for the extension of his dominion – by announcing his ball he is really announcing his own presence, and those who listen by attending the ball accept his rule. Furthermore, by commissioning the Goose to write about the ball, so that future generations will hear of it secures the Peacock's position in history. This bears some resemblance to Robinson's concerns with posterity in both her *To The Muse of Poetry* and *Modern Manners*, and the conflict between the allure of modishness and the desire for historical survival. Dorset ridicules the notion that something as ultimately trivial as a ball could secure the Peacock's place in history, and hints that the political games of the Peacock and the real-life society beaux and belles that he mirrors may well reflect political significance in form, but not in content.

⁷⁶ Dorset, op. cit., p. 20, ll. 202-205.

2.1 ‘My crowing speaks the envious light’: Eaton, Thelwall, and the Chaunticlere Fable

It was Paine who accused Burke of being dazzled by the plumage of monarchy, but it was another radical, Daniel Isaac Eaton, who explicitly expanded the metaphor into a full satire, entitled ‘King Chaunticlere; or The Fate of Tyranny’, which he printed in his periodical *Politics for the People; or A Salmagundy for Swine* in 1793.⁷⁷ Rather, Eaton printed the satire after listening to John Thelwall recite it at a meeting of the Capel Court Debating Society earlier that year.⁷⁸ The authorship of ‘King Chaunticlere’ is problematic: Mason describes the satire as ‘one of the Romantic period’s more complicated instances of both heteroglossia and multiple authorship’.⁷⁹ The fact that it was spoken publicly by one person and then written and published by another presents problems: where Marilyn Butler attributes the text solely to Eaton in her anthology of Romantic-era political writing and satire, *Burke, Paine, Godwin and the Revolution Controversy*, Mason posits that,

By all accounts, John Thelwall [...] deserves primary credit for turning the Chanticleer fable into an allegory on monarchical government, since it was he who first presented the modernized fable at [...] the Capel Court Debating Society.⁸⁰

Furthermore, in an essay on Thelwall, Michael Scrivener refers to ‘King Chaunticlere’ as his text, counting its origin from the point when it was delivered

⁷⁷ John Mee has also noted the invocation of Paine’s passage by Eaton’s satire. See his chapter “‘Examples of Safe Printing’: Censorship and Popular Radical Literature in the 1790s”, in Nigel Smith (ed.), *Literature and Censorship* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993), pp. 81-95, here p. 87.

⁷⁸ Mason, introduction to ‘King Chaunticlere’ in *BS vol. 1*, p. 41.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

orally in public.⁸¹ However, for clarity I will refer to the author as Eaton, as it was he who transcribed and published it, thus turning it from the spoken word into a physical text. It is crucial that we acknowledge ‘King Chaunticlere’, however, and Eaton’s subsequent trial, as having begun as part of an oral tradition. Michael Scrivener, for example, has noted that

Even after severely repressive legislation made open political work impossible, radicals could still retreat to their taverns and sing radical songs [...] it was very difficult to suppress tavern radicalism because in London there were so many different places where one could meet [...] and because songs, toasts, and spontaneous, casual speeches were difficult to construe as threats to the state.⁸²

Although Eaton was tried for the published version of the fable, that it was reproduced from an oral version suggests that his acquittal was, at least in part, due to the inherent ambiguity and adaptability of orally-told stories and satires. McCalman posits that tavern debating clubs were the location for ‘radical organisation and strategy’. They were part of ‘long established popular traditions [...] since the sixteenth century’,⁸³ and that, in the eighteenth century, ‘most of these alehouse clubs in London had been absorbed into the democratic agitation of the 1790s, helping them to make a staple Jacobin form’.⁸⁴ Debating clubs such as the Capel Court Society could get away with a surprising amount, because of the difficulty, as Scrivener and McCalman suggest, of prosecuting unprinted material, and the ability of oral traditions to obscure overt political statements. ‘King Chaunticlere’, even in its printed form, is part of this tradition.

Although the form of ‘King Chaunticlere’ stems from oral tavern culture, the content of Eaton and Thelwall’s satire is inspired by Chaucer’s ‘The Nun’s

⁸¹ Michael Scrivener, ‘John Thelwall and Popular Jacobin Allegory, 1793-95’, in *ELH*, 67: 4 (Winter 2000), pp. 951-971.

⁸² Scrivener, op. cit., p. 955.

⁸³ McCalman, op. cit., p. 113.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

Priest's Tale' and William Caxton's 'Reynard the Fox', in which the cockerel Chaunticlere features. However, where Chaucer's tale presents Chaunticlere, a barnyard cockerel, as a benign ruler and husband to several doting hens, Eaton and Thelwall refigure the character into a bullying despot who terrorises the other inhabitants of the yard. In addition, Barrell cites 'a long and dull verse fable, which may also be by Thelwall, published in the *Morning Chronicle* in August 1793', as the probable immediate inspiration for Eaton's 'King Chaunticlere'. This version represents the French nation as the gamecock, 'habituated to exploitation but rediscovering an instinctual love of liberty'.⁸⁵ The history of the Chaunticlere figure has parallels with both Robinson's *To The Muse of Poetry*, and to Burke's image of the swinish multitude, discussed above in chapter one. Both Robinson and Eaton are speaking to literary traditions stretching back to the Renaissance and the medieval period, and both recycle figures from those periods – Rinaldo with the former, and Chaunticlere, of course, with the latter.

After publishing the short prose satire, Eaton was tried for treason. 'The ensuing [...] trial', Mason explains, 'would become one of the landmark court cases of the tumultuous 1790s'.⁸⁶ Eaton was subsequently acquitted after raising enough doubt that his Chaunticlere was supposed to represent the British King, since, as the defence argued, 'even the simplest of readers would recognize the cock as a symbol of France'.⁸⁷

The satire begins with the response to a previous speaker's anecdote of a slave in the West Indies being slowly boiled to death as punishment for trying to

⁸⁵ Barrell, op. cit., p. 106.

⁸⁶ Mason, op. cit., p. 41.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 42. Mason notes that in a brilliant and rather brave gesture, Eaton's first act after he was acquitted was to rename his shop 'The Cock and Swine'.

escape. Briefly, a fellow slave tries to bludgeon him to put him out of his misery, but the slave instinctively shields himself from the blow and suffers the awful consequences of a slow death. Eaton explains that the proponent of this story offers it as an example of humanity's preference for pain over instant death: 'the love of life must certainly have the strongest influence on the actions of mankind'.⁸⁸ However, Eaton rightfully notes that

if this magnanimous advocate for the *frying pan of despotism*, had happened to have reflected a little on the physical laws of the animal frame, he would have known that his motion of the arms was merely involuntary and that neither love, nor fear, nor liberty, nor any other preference of the judgment, had any thing at all to do with it.⁸⁹

Where the previous speaker used this example to demonstrate that the love of life outweighs the love of liberty, Eaton reinterprets it to suggest that the 'love' of life is a 'mere mechanical impulse', whereas the love of liberty is naturally higher, or more noble, because it takes a conscious, often difficult effort, to express. He connects the slave's futile act of self-preservation to the acts of self-preservation performed by tyrannised populations:

just as men of base and abject minds, who have been long used to cringe and tremble at the names of kings and lords, for they should be clapped up in bastilles, or turned out of their shops, continue to cringe and tremble, when neither shops nor bastilles happen to be present to their imaginations.⁹⁰

Finally, to prove this, Eaton presents the Chaunticlere story that Thelwall told to the Capel Court Society. Briefly, the cockerel named Chaunticlere tyrannises the other animals of the barnyard, and the narrating farmer, seeing this, swiftly grabs the cockerel and decapitates him. The parallels with the French Revolution are

⁸⁸ Eaton and Thelwall, 'King Chaunticlere', in *BS vol. 1*, p. 44.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

clear, and a fairly blatant warning to any other European or domestic tyrants. At this point in the narrative, Eaton ties his Chaunticlere story to the slave anecdote:

But that which it is particularly my duty to dwell upon, as applicable to the story of the poor mutilated Negro, is the continuance of the habitual muscular motion after (by means of the loss of his head) he was no longer capable of knowing what he was about. In short, being long in the habit of flying up, and *striking* with his spurs [...] he still continued the same hostile kind of action [...] so that if the gentlemen had been there [...] he might have concluded [...] that this effort of King Chaunticlere proceeded from the conviction that life was worth preserving even after he had lost his head: which, in my opinion, would be just about as rational as supposing that it can be worth preserving to that man who is writhing about in *the frying pan of despotism*.⁹¹

Eaton juxtaposes the position of Chaunticlere with that of the slave in the previous anecdote: he uses the cockerel's mechanical post-decapitation movement to prove that the defensive gesture of the slave is equally mechanical. The way that the slave moves unwittingly is an extension of his bondage, but the cockerel's movements highlight that he too is bonded to the relationship of tyrant and tyrannised. Furthermore, the narrator's presence as the farmer, who decapitates the cockerel, presents another authority figure, above Chaunticlere, which further suggests that the cockerel's authority is not unbounded. The idea that the tyrant Chaunticlere is as bound to his fate as the animals he tyrannises adds a new dynamic to the theme of hierarchy so prevalent in satiric bird imagery. Eaton's argument that the slave who raises his hand to defend himself is as conscious of his actions as the cockerel who kicks after he has been decapitated can be read back to when the cockerel torments his neighbours. The sense of the inevitable fate of the cockerel forces the question of whether he was able to choose to tyrannise or not. Born into his position as game cock, and

⁹¹ Eaton and Thelwall, op. cit., pp. 45-46.

‘nursed in blood and slaughter from his infancy’,⁹² Eaton asks how far the cockerel can be held to account for his actions. This is very reminiscent of Paine’s assertion that ‘

It was not against Louis the XVIth, but against the despotic principles of the government, that the nation revolted. These principles had not their origin in him, but in the original establishment, many centuries back; and they were become too deeply rooted to be removed [...] The natural moderation of Louis XVI contributed nothing to alter the hereditary despotism of the monarchy.⁹³

Of course, Chaunticlere is far from naturally moderate, but this does not diminish Paine’s point that it is the system of monarchy, rather than individuals, that creates despotism. Similarly, the system that ‘nursed’ Chaunticlere in violence is more responsible for his despotic behaviour than Chaunticlere is himself. Scrivener points out that the author

uses himself as an example of having been deprived of wilful moral choice because he was so hesitant to get rid of the gamecock even after the evidence was overwhelming that it was ruining the barnyard; he was reluctant to act because of habitual, unreflective, and mechanical behaviour.⁹⁴

Scrivener is right, but we can also apply this reading to the cockerel, who is just as accustomed to ‘habitual, unreflective, and mechanical behaviour’ even before his decapitation. Furthermore, we can re-read Dorset’s *The Peacock “At Home”* in this light: the peacock is inherently, essentially a showy bird: he can no more change his nature than Chaunticlere can stop being an aggressive gamecock, or a King can change the essentially tyrannical nature of monarchy.

The parallels between Eaton’s tale and the French Revolution are transparent, and as a result Eaton was prosecuted for inciting the British king’s

⁹² Eaton and Thelwall, op. cit., p. 45.

⁹³ Paine, op. cit., p. 47.

⁹⁴ Scrivener, op. cit., p. 958.

death, but the events in ‘King Chaunticlere’ cannot really be called revolutionary, because the other barnyard animals that Chaunticlere torments do not revolt against him. Rather, the farmer, invested with a higher authority, intervenes from above, not to upset the natural order, but to restore it. At Eaton’s trial, the defence feigned puzzlement that political libel could be read into an animal fable. Moreover, the gamecock is a symbol of France, not England, and so even if political allegory could be read into the fable, it would be an attack on the French, not the British, monarch.⁹⁵ In his barnyard fable, Eaton seems to suggest that the ousting of tyrants is a return to the natural, or correct order of things, as opposed to an overthrowing of the establishment. Mark Philp has expressed confusion as to Thelwall and Eaton’s purpose. He asks,

How, in particular, is the quite detailed reference to the virtues of the guillotine to be read?! It is worth asking whether Thelwall was just colossally imprudent – or whether it is evidence of a form of collective impudence [...] In a great deal of the material of the 1790s, we are dealing less with a clear-cut ideological division with well worked-out opposing principles and more with experimentation, both in the use of particular media and the position being advanced.⁹⁶

Thelwall and Eaton are certainly experimenting with oral traditions and print culture, and it is true that they do not necessarily espouse a particular ideological position. However, despite what Eaton’s defence argued at his trial, the imagery in ‘King Chaunticlere’ is stark and clear – the fate of tyrants and of tyranny is that of both symbolic and literal decapitation. Scrivener is right to point out, though, that

⁹⁵ Mason, *BS vol. 1*, p. 42.

⁹⁶ Mark Philp, ‘The fragmented ideology of reform’, in Philp (ed.), *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 50-77, here pp. 71-72.

From actual regicide to peaceful agitation for reform there is a spectrum of activist politics that the fable could suggest, but the fable does not indicate any single line of real political action.⁹⁷

Similarly, John Mee suggests that ‘There is an important sense in which the literature produced by the controversy over the French Revolution can be seen as a “discussion” of principles’,⁹⁸ and that ‘Radicals inherited a tradition of linguistic indirection’.⁹⁹ Moreover he posits,

an important if neglected section of the literature of the Revolution controversy coveted forms that were both allusive and elusive. The slipperiness of the language was exploited to frustrate the prosecution’s legal need to fix determinate meanings on a libel.¹⁰⁰

Mee discusses ‘King Chaunticlere’ in direct relation to this point, commenting that the satire

is careful to keep the exact referent of its discussion of the crown uncertain [...] The text does not limit its sphere of allusion only to British history, nor to recent events in France, nor to the prospects back in the Britain of 1794. By keeping its meaning indeterminate, it achieves a critical demystification of monarchy while achieving relative security against prosecution.¹⁰¹

Indeed, the fable does not suggest any political action *per se*, but is more of a warning, or reminder, to tyrants and tyrannical regimes that this is the inevitable outcome of their despotism. In this light, the farmer who decapitates Chaunticlere can be interpreted as representing the inevitability of revolution following tyranny, rather than as a call to revolution itself.

⁹⁷ Scrivener, op. cit., p. 962.

⁹⁸ Mee, op. cit., p. 81.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 85.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 86.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 88.

In 1795 Thelwall followed up 'King Chaunticlere' with *John Gilpin's Ghost*, in which Chaunticlere features briefly.¹⁰² Scrivener has pointed out that the two hundred and sixty four-line radical poem refers to William Cowper's 'The Diverting History of John Gilpin'.¹⁰³ In the preface to *John Gilpin's Ghost*, Thelwall explains that after Eaton had been acquitted for publishing 'King Chaunticlere',

I [Thelwall] took an opportunity of sending [...] a small packet of books to a brother-in-law who resides in *Oakham* [...] containing, among other articles, some copies of this ludicrous story [...] But a conspiracy to intercept my papers had been formed by the *great men of Oakham* [...] the house of my brother-in-law was broke open, and rifled of papers, books letters &c. and *lawyer Combes* [alluded to in the subsequent satire] was posted to London to acquaint the GREAT MAN in DOWNING-STREET with the wonderful discovery.¹⁰⁴

Thelwall uses this incident for the basis of *John Gilpin's Ghost*, whose central target is the repressive and notorious libel laws of the 1790s. The poem follows the lawyer Combes, who is awoken one night by the ghost of his father, John Gilpin. He instructs him to go to Oakham and intercept a coach, clearly meant to be Thelwall's, containing seditious literature. After taking the material to *The Crown* pub, where the men of Oakham have congregated to deal with the threat of Jacobinism, the guillotined cockerel from 'King Chaunticlere' appears, giving a final warning about the fate of tyrants.

Thelwall's poem makes several references to the swinish multitude, who lay awake at night with hunger, and he ties these references to the central theme of popular print culture.¹⁰⁵ Like Shelley's swinish multitude in *Swellfoot the*

¹⁰² Thelwall, *John Gilpin's Ghost; or, The Warning Voice of King Chanticleer: An historical ballad: Written before the late trials, and dedicated to the treason-hunters of Oakham* (London: T. Smith, 1795).

¹⁰³ Scrivener, op. cit., p. 963.

¹⁰⁴ Thelwall, cited in Scrivener, op. cit., p. 964.

¹⁰⁵ Thelwall, *John Gilpin's Ghost*, p. 2, ll. 37-40.

Tyrant, the people are kept in their swinish state through repression. In *Swellfoot*, it is through starvation, but in *John Gilpin's Ghost* Thelwall suggests that it is through the oppression of the press. For example, when the men of Oakham meet to discuss the discovery of (Thelwall's) seditious papers, they meet at *The Crown*, fearful 'Lest *Sans-Cullotes*, with pop-guns arm'd, / Should beat the Sign-post down'.¹⁰⁶ Thelwall continues,

That Sign-post which so long has stood,
The wonder of each lout,
Till with seditious paper balls,
Tom Paine kick'd up a rout.¹⁰⁷

The sign-post for the aptly-named *Crown* pub represents the monopoly that the establishment would like to have on the press. However, with publications such as Paine's *Rights of Man* and implicitly, Eaton and Thelwall's 'King Chaunticlere', the paper balls of sedition have been hurled at and defaced *The Crown's* sign. The poem's links to oral tavern culture, through 'King Chaunticlere' inform the imagery that taunts the establishment that with rigid, non-adaptive legislation unsuccessfully prosecute radicals for libel. The balls of paper represent the emerging radical print culture, but also pay homage to the radical oral culture that spawned satires such as Eaton's 'King Chaunticlere'. Thelwall continues to mock the usurpation of the establishment-press in the next two stanzas:

(Since when, ah woe! ah well-a-day!
How *fool'scap* has abounded!)
And crowns, and mitres eke to boot,
And sign-post Dukes confounded.

¹⁰⁶ Thelwall, *John Gilpin's Ghost*, ll. 19-20.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, ll. 21-24.

Then wonder not, ye *Oakham* men,
Nor scratch your heads to know
Why those who gaudy sign-posts love
Should with such fury glow.¹⁰⁸

Thelwall jeers at the government's inability to keep pace with the popular press: the wooden, static sign-post must stand as it is pelted with ephemeral, small, but numerous and effective balls of paper, hurled from radical printing presses. Although the libel laws were in principal extremely oppressive, trials like Eaton's demonstrated that satirists could use allegory, innuendo and ambiguity to slip out of the clutches of prosecution. Barrell observes the built-in rhetorical loopholes of Thelwall's poem:

The [Chaunticlere] ghost claims to speak for enlightenment; but enlightenment of course repudiates all belief in ghosts, which are the chimeras, the spectres of a superstitious imagination.¹⁰⁹ His regicidal speech is not therefore, so the defence would no doubt have argued, anything that Thelwall himself has imagined.¹¹⁰

Because Thelwall channels the incitement of any seditious action through the ghost of Chaunticlere, which is merely a 'spectre of a superstitious imagination', Thelwall himself could not be said have imagined doing so himself. Similarly, Scrivener has pointed out the establishment's inability to keep up with and prosecute radical oral culture:

The "Chaunticlere" allegory [...] became, as part of print culture, a seditious libel that was prosecuted [...] the government lacked reliable techniques whereby it could with any accuracy translate the intelligibility of popular oral-culture event into something that was amenable to the interpretative strategies of a judicial prosecution. The very instability of Jacobin allegory was even

¹⁰⁸ Thelwall, *John Gilpin's Ghost*, ll. 25-32.

¹⁰⁹ See below, chapter five, for a discussion of the use of chimeras and monstrosity in the period's satire.

¹¹⁰ Barrell, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

apparent in the more rigid print-culture form of the *Politics for the People's* transcription of the speech.¹¹¹

Eaton's publication of 'King Chaunticlere' was difficult to prosecute partially because it came from an oral tradition that was defined by its mutability and instability. Even in printed form, Scrivener suggests, the satire retains much of the ambiguity that prevented Eaton from being successfully prosecuted. *John Gilpin's Ghost* reminds readers of the radical popular press's ability to circumnavigate prosecution through its ephemerality, and its roots in oral culture: the rigid sign at *The Crown*, pelted with balls of paper is juxtaposed with the seditious papers seized by Combes. Where one must stand, unable to avoid being defaced and ridiculed, the other, although seized, prosecuted or even destroyed, is easily reproduced, and through courting prosecution, strengthens its own cause for freedom of the press. The lords of Oakham, meanwhile, can only scratch their heads as they look on in wonder as their beloved sign-post is helplessly vandalised. Scrivener comments that the effect of representing the establishment and its press as a sign-post is to reduce the meaning of 'crown' to simple letters on a sign:

In a fiercely anti-Burkean maneuver, Thelwall drains all spiritual suggestiveness whatsoever from the words "state" and "church," stripping them down to mere words on a commercial sign.¹¹²

Effectively, Thelwall brings the institution of monarchy down to the level of the popular press, where it can be engaged and damaged, and crucially, dissolves the hierarchical framework that places monarchy and the state above the criticism of the popular radical press.

¹¹¹ Scrivener, op. cit., p. 698.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 966.

The Oakhamites justify their tyranny over the press by claiming that “‘In the book ‘tis said, / “As all divines agree, / “*The Swinish Multitude must crouch / Before the pow’rs that be*’.¹¹³ It is crucial that this is written, because here, the authority of the printed word is supreme. If it was written that ‘the herd / Should have all their labour brings’, then they would ‘live as well as priests themselves, / And grow as wise as kings’.¹¹⁴ The unconscionable scenario that the lower classes might benefit from their own labour would not only mean that they could raise their standard of living, but worse, that they would pull themselves out of the mire of ignorance and illiteracy that keeps them as a controllable herd. Combes arrives at *The Crown* immediately after these lines are spoken, armed with the spoils from his raid. However, he is armed with a Trojan horse, as no sooner does he open the parcel than Chaunticlere leaps out and delivers his message:

“My crowing speaks the envious light
 “That soon must clear the sky;
 “For *kingcraft’s, priestcraft’s night* is past,
 “And *Reason’s dawn* is nigh.

“In me behold the fate to which
 “All tyranny must bow,
 “And those who’ve long oppress’d the poor
 “Shall be as I am now.”¹¹⁵

The next lines further underscore Thelwall’s relation of Chaunticlere to popular, ephemeral print culture:

He spoke---they would have stopp’d his voice,
 And kept him close confin’d;
 But ah! he ‘scap’d their anxious care,

¹¹³ Thelwall, *John Gilpin’s Ghost*, p. 9, ll. 37-40.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10, ll. 45-48.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11, ll. 85-92.

As flits impassive wind.¹¹⁶

The Oakhamites cannot contain Chaunticlere's message, not because it has a particularly profound force or fierce rhetorical power, but because its deliverer, Chaunticlere, is fleeting, mobile and adaptable. In contrast to *The Crown's* signpost, no one can attack Chaunticlere with balls of paper because he is not rooted, not static. Chaunticlere makes his point and leaves before he can be grabbed: he defies the hierarchy that is more easily imposed on a rigid format. Popular literature and satire is, at its most effective, ephemeral, mutable and ambiguous, and here Thelwall presents a model of how to beat the rigid and static libel legislation.

The game cock in 'King Chaunticlere' and decapitated bird in *John Gilpin's Ghost* are presented very differently, but both deliver the same message: that the unchanging, rigid imposition of authority on the masses must inevitably result in revolution, and violence towards the establishment. In 'King Chaunticlere', Eaton presents a highly topical, arguably fairly simple picture of a tyrant meeting his doom, but in *John Gilpin's Ghost* Thelwall adapts this into a discussion of the clash between the radical popular press and the state's attempt to control it. Here, the Chaunticlere figure becomes a metaphor for the adaptability of emergent print-culture, and its subsequent avoidance of the rigidity that binds the Oakhamites of the poem and the state legislature that they represent.

Ostensibly, Eaton and Thelwall's radical publications have very little to do with Robinson and Dorset's gentler social satires. However, even in 'King Chaunticlere' one of the central features of the cockerel is that he is a 'very fine

¹¹⁶ Thelwall, *John Gilpin's Ghost*, ll. 93-96.

majestic kind of animal'.¹¹⁷ As Paine accuses Burke of being dazzled by the plumage of monarchy, so the farmer cannot

help looking with considerable reverence, upon the majestic decoration of the person of the king Chaunticlere – such as his ermine spotted breast, the fine gold trappings about his neck and shoulders, the flowing robe of plumage tucked up at his rump, and, above all, that fine ornamented thing upon his head there – (his crown, or *coxcorn* [...])¹¹⁸

In Eaton and Thelwall's *Chaunticlere* satires, the metaphor of the cockerel is central to their analysis of the nature of despotism, the inevitability of popular political revolt, and the rise of popular print culture. In addition, Eaton and Thelwall consciously use a figure from medieval literature, but one that was originally represented by Chaucer as a benign dictator. Re-using an already existent figure rather than inventing a new one establishes a continuity with the past, but changing, or even inverting what that figure represents disregards the authority of the past that Burke would regard as inherent. Chapters one and two above have already discussed how this happened with swine and bull imagery, but both of those images came to prominence only in the eighteenth century, whereas, featuring in both Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and Caxton's 'Reynard the Fox', Chaunticlere was a much more well-established literary figure. The inversion of the nature of the character from benign ruler to violent despot, and finally, to enlightened prophet in *John Gilpin's Ghost*, makes the rejection of prior literary, and by extension, political, authority all the stronger.

In *To the Muse of Poetry*, Robinson also speaks to literary precedent and tradition through her use of bird imagery, but here, it is to revere rather than reject. Characterising her muse as a bird, and calling her fellow poet Merry

¹¹⁷ Eaton and Thelwall, *King Chaunticlere*, p. 45.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

‘Rinaldo’, Robinson’s poem consciously recalls the chaste courtly romances found in epic Renaissance poetry such as Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*. Rather than the literary and political usurpation that Gifford claims the Della Cruscans represent, Robinson’s *To The Muse of Poetry* is an overtly conventional poetry of ‘chaste romance’. Importantly, in speaking to Rinaldo she establishes a system of poetic hierarchy that places her above him, and she achieves this by advising him against the dangers that her own winged-muse has already conquered. When Robinson published *Modern Manners* two years later in 1793, the gentle romance of her previous work had given way to a much sharper satire on the insignificance of critics like Gifford, and the ridiculousness of ‘thrice-feather’d’ society belles. The political overtones of this poem are also much stronger – as well as disavowing the French Revolution following its descent into the Terror, Robinson jibes at the hypocritical world of fashionable Whig society, which until recently, she had been part of herself. *Modern Manners* uses bird imagery primarily to attack the silliness of the performance that makes up high society. Because Whig politics in particular was so inextricably a part of the make-up of high society, Robinson’s attack on fashion is unavoidably a political statement as well.

Where *Modern Manners* attacks several targets, one of which is high society, Dorset’s *The Peacock “At Home”* focuses itself specifically as a social satire. Hierarchy again plays a central role in the satire, but the birds’ society is given unique complexity, with numerous species representing different facets of a strictly hierarchical society. Like *Modern Manners*, the bird society of Dorset’s *The Peacock “At Home”* has parallels with Whig society in the period, and even the title hints at the mingling of public and private spaces that characterised fashionable Whig life. Social functions, gambling and the home were all

ostensibly private, but in reality were very public affairs, and undoubtedly, Dorset's poem speaks directly about this. Her creation of a hierarchy largely based on appearance, and one that is species-specific and therefore unbreakable is also significant. Animals such as the mammalian bat fall outside the strict entry requirements and so are denied access to the party, as is the jackdaw for his reputation for being a thief. Similarly, the game-cock is castigated for daring to arrive in his spurs. These incidents establish the rule of difference, highlighting the line between exclusion and inclusion. Reading Dorset's poem as a satire specifically on Whig society means that *The Peacock "At Home"* is a comment not only on the exclusivity of high society in the eighteenth century, but importantly, it is an attack on the exclusivity, and rigid hierarchy of the period's politics.

In the satires that this chapter has analysed, there is a fairly clear division between the radical publications of Eaton and Thelwall, and the more moderate social satires of Dorset and Robinson.¹¹⁹ However, there are several important aspects that they share, which crucially, are tied to the bird metaphors that they all use. The inherent qualities of bird imagery suggest beauty, and underscore the importance of appearance. The presence of beauty suggests also that of ugliness, and this in turn raises the issue of difference and exclusion. These themes are present in all the satires, but are most prevalent in Dorset and Robinson's. Most importantly, where there is exclusion there are hierarchies, and undoubtedly bird imagery is the most successful of animal metaphors in eliciting the sense of hierarchies in both society and politics. Moreover, satires such as *The Peacock*

¹¹⁹ Although *Modern Manners* is more overtly political than *The Peacock "At Home"*, Robinson's poem still sits on the other side of political satire. Furthermore, her disavowal of the French Revolution in the poem can also be read as a moderation of her politics, and the poem itself as a return to more socially-minded writing, in contrast to the earlier, pro-Revolutionary *Ainsi va le Monde*.

"At Home" draw attention to the relationship between society and politics, particularly with regard to the Whigs as both a political party and the cream of fashionable high society.

Equally, radical satires using bird imagery highlight the hierarchical nature of politics, but looking up from beneath seek to deconstruct those hierarchies. Wolcot's *Out at Last* does so by representing the office of Prime Minister as magnificent, but separating that permanent office from the impermanent person who occupies it. The origins of 'King Chaunticlere' and *John Gilpin's Ghost* lie in oral tavern culture, and both advocate a position of adaptability in the face of the rigid authority of oppressive legislation, while 'King Chaunticlere' specifically serves as a warning to tyrants hoping to dazzle the tyrannised with their 'majestic decoration'. More so than any other satiric animal metaphor, bird imagery is varied and diverse, and is used across a range of different kinds of satires. However, its inherent qualities lend common themes to the satires that use bird metaphors and consistently remind readers not to be taken in by outward appearances.

Chapter Four

‘Why vent, poor driveller, all thy spite on me?’: Reptile and Insect Imagery in the satires of William Gifford, Mary Robinson and John Wolcot

If bird imagery in satire is used primarily to depict the relationship between social and political hierarchies, then in the satires of William Gifford and the Della Cruscans, it is reptile and insect imagery that is used to discuss the relationship between political and artistic authority. Gifford published the first edition of his best-known satire, *The Baviad*, in 1791, which used reptile imagery to attack the Della Cruscans, ostensibly for the quality of their poetry.¹ Later, Gifford edited the periodicals the *Anti-Jacobin; or, Weekly Examiner* from 1797-1798 and *The Quarterly Review* from 1809-1824.² The *Anti-Jacobin*, as Richard Cronin describes it,

supported Pitt and assailed his enemies [...] It was the achievement of *The Anti-Jacobin* to harness in the defence of established power the kind of fierce rhetorical energy that in normal circumstances is a resource available only to those in opposition.³

Gifford specialised in this ‘fierce rhetorical energy’, using it to direct ‘personal and vindictive attacks’ on his targets both in the *Anti-Jacobin* and *The Baviad*.⁴ As its title would suggest, the *Anti-Jacobin; or, Weekly Examiner* was devised to combat sympathy for the revolutionaries in France, and to discourage Jacobinical thinking in England. Roy Benjamin Clark explains the factors that led to the formation of the periodical:

¹ This was followed by *The Mæviad* in 1795, which focussed more heavily on the perceived shortcomings of the period’s drama.

² Roy Benjamin Clark, *William Gifford: Tory Satirist, Critic, and Editor* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930), p. 18.

³ Richard Cronin, *The Politics of Romantic Poetry: In Search of the Pure Commonwealth* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 61-62.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

The need of a strong government organ was the greater in view of the danger from France. Negotiations for peace, at Lille (1797) had failed, and John Hookham Frere, who held a minor diplomatic post in the government and had gone with Lord Malmsbury to Lille, had returned to England [...] Fox, one of the ablest statesmen in England, was an open advocate of the Revolution. With [...] these conditions facing it, the government was trying to make the great mass of the English people believe that there was a real social danger from France.⁵

When Gifford was selected to edit the *Anti-Jacobin*, he ‘accepted without an instant’s hesitation’.⁶ He set about, as Cronin suggests, cultivating a sense of paranoia about Jacobinism in England:

No state power was secure, for there was a multitude of ideological enemies busily attempting to undermine it. The stability of the nation, the survival of its institutions, values, and traditions could be secured only by an unremitting vigilance.⁷

If ‘no state power was secure’, then no cultural institution was, either. For Gifford, England’s artistic and literary output was linked intrinsically to the political well-being of the country. Cronin expands upon this suggestion:

Jacobinism [...] was not an exclusively political phenomenon: it contaminated social life, particularly the relationships between the sexes, and it permeated the national culture, particularly its literature.⁸

An unhealthy literature, then, was part of a diseased politics, and Gifford considered the Della Cruscans a major symptom of this. For the editor of *The Anti-Jacobin*, politics and art were not separate, and so to criticise art or literature was to make a political statement as well. In *The Baviad*, Gifford’s primary

⁵ Roy Benjamin Clark, op. cit., p. 82.

⁶ Ibid., p. 84.

⁷ Cronin, op. cit., p. 62.

⁸ Ibid., p. 64.

motives for attacking the Della Cruscans are political, not artistic. Moreover, Gifford uses reptile imagery to disguise political attacks as artistic criticism. Following *The Baviad*, Mary Robinson published a response of sorts with her poem *Modern Manners*, which represents Gifford as one of a swarm of insect-like critics.

1.1 *The Anti-Jacobin* and the politics of *The Baviad*

The Anti-Jacobin was specifically created, as Roy Benjamin Clark explains, by a group led by the Tory Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs, George Canning, to ‘combat the influence of the French Revolution in England’.⁹ Gifford was selected to edit this paper because of the unrelenting, often violent, critical style he had demonstrated in *The Baviad* and *The Maeviad*. Where the Della Cruscans had fallen foul of one ‘who assumed certain fixed and unchangeable poetic standards’, *The Anti-Jacobin* required an editor of a similarly rigid political position.¹⁰ The author of the 1846 biography of Canning, Robert Bell, notes that Canning chose Gifford rather than himself for the editorship because

it required a rougher hand than his [...] one, too, not likely to wince from mud and bruises. The author of the *Baviad* and *Maeviad* was exactly the man – hard, coarse, inexorable, unscrupulous. He brought with him into this paper a thoroughly brutal spirit.¹¹

This suggests that Canning saw Gifford’s artistic and political attitudes as interchangeable, and indeed, Gifford approached his editorial post with the same fervour that he employed in his satires. For his services as editor, Gifford was rewarded with the office of Paymaster of the Band of Gentlemen Pensioners, a

⁹ Cronin, op. cit., p. 82.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 81.

¹¹ Robert Bell, *The Life of the Rt. Hon. George Canning* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1846), p. 29. Cited in Roy Benjamin Clark, op. cit., p. 84.

nominal post that earned him an annual £1000 sinecure. Gifford was also given a double commissionership of the Lottery, which came with another £100 a year, which lasted for the rest of his life.¹² Gifford's editorship of *The Anti-Jacobin*, then, marked the beginning of an overt association with, and responsibility to, the Tory government and William Pitt.¹³

Gifford published his *Baviad* six years before he established his public ties to the Tories and his career as Tory editor-writer, and so we must be careful not to read *The Baviad* as a Tory satire on the Della Cruscans. However, it is undoubtedly conservative, both artistically and in its broader political ideology, rejecting revolution and innovation as he caricatures 'the follies that engage / The full-grown children of this piping age'.¹⁴ Despite Gifford's own assertions that he was motivated by artistic considerations, writing only 'to correct the growing depravity of the public taste', Gifford's polemical style of satire frames his artistic criticism within a political discourse.¹⁵ Moreover, Gifford's choice of targets, members of a group which publicly supported the French Revolution, must inevitably lead to a political reading of his motivations.¹⁶

1.2 The Della Cruscans

The founder of the Della Cruscan movement was Robert Merry, who contributed nineteen sections to *The Florence Miscellany*, a collection privately published by

¹² Roy Benjamin Clark, op. cit., p. 18.

¹³ Ibid., p. 168.

¹⁴ William Gifford, *The Baviad; A Paraphrastic Imitation of the First Satire of Persius* (1791), in *BS* vol. 4, p. 10, ll. 19-20.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁶ In 1791 Robert Merry gave 'an impassioned recital of his ode *Fall of the Bastille* at a 14 July meeting of Revolutionary sympathisers in the Strand' (Strachan, *BS* vol. 4, p. xxxi). In addition, Merry published *The Laurel of Liberty; A Poem* in 1790, and his *Ode for the fourteenth of July, 1791, the day consecrated to freedom: being the anniversary of the revolution in France* in 1791. Both poems give support to the Revolution in Merry's typical, ornate register. Mary Robinson, writing as 'Laura Maria' published *Ainsi va le Monde* in 1790, as a response to Merry's *Laurel* and as an echo of the support for the Revolution in that poem.

the group in 1785.¹⁷ Merry used the pseudonym ‘Della Crusca’ from 1787 until 1789, which he took from the *Accademia della Crusca* that had been disbanded in 1783 by the Grand Duke Leopold of Tuscany.¹⁸ The poems that made up *The Florence Miscellany* were initially intended for private circulation amongst the group, as Hester Thrale Piozzi, a member of Merry’s group, explained: ‘We wrote to divert ourselves, and to say kind things to each other; we collected them that our reciprocal expressions might not be lost’.¹⁹ However, from 1786, *The European Magazine* printed works from this private collection for public appreciation.²⁰ Then, in 1787 Merry, published ‘The Adieu and Recall To Love’ in Edward Topham’s fashionable society magazine *The World*. Two weeks later Hannah Cowley, writing as ‘Anna Matilda’, responded to it with her poem, ‘The Pen’. Thus began a courtship in poetry that lasted until 1789, when after two years of public correspondence, Merry finally met Cowley, only to find she was middle aged, married and unattractive. The *Dictionary of British Radicals* notes that ‘Merry had doubtlessly thought Anna Matilda was a young and beautiful woman. Mrs. Cowley, however, was neither: she was forty-six, [and] chubby’.²¹ Merry’s final poem to her was entitled ‘The Interview’, but can hardly be said to accurately reflect Merry and Cowley’s encounter. John Strachan argues that the poem

¹⁷ *Dictionary of British Radicals, Volume 1: 1770-1830*, eds. Joseph O. Baylen and Norbert J. Gossman (Hassocks: The Harvester Press, 1979), p. 319. Hereafter referred to as *DBR*.

¹⁸ Merry was deeply upset at the *Accademia*’s disbandment by the Duke, which was not helped by the fact that the Duke was a love-rival of Merry’s, who had vied for the affections of Lady Cowper, with whom Merry had an affair. See *DBR*.

¹⁹ Cited in W.N. Hargreaves-Mawdsley, *The English Della Crusicans and Their Time, 1783-1828* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967), p. 98.

²⁰ Strachan, *BS vol. 4*, p. xvi.

²¹ *DBR*, p. 320.

sheds little light on the actual meeting of two human beings. The poem might be said to be Della Crusca's rather than Robert Merry's, Crusca's [sic] account of his visionary encounter with Anna Matilda.²²

Merry seems to be aware of this separation between the meeting of Crusca and Matilda, and their real-life counterparts. 'Della Crusca' describes the encounter as meeting a 'living Angel', at whose feet he 'sunk but with an agony more sweet'.²³ However, the exclamatory lines in capitals, 'ANNA MATILDA NEVER CAN BE THINE', and 'THE FOND DELUSION'S O'ER' hint at the realisation that not only was the real-life interview between Merry and Cowley disappointing, but also that 'Anna Matilda' was only ever a fantasy, and not, as the previous lines suggest, a tangible manifestation of 'Imagination's bodied air'.²⁴

The use of pseudonyms plays a major role in the construction of the Della Cruscans' identities, both as authors, and as characters within the texts. Importantly, this meant that one writer could assume multiple identities. After 'Della Crusca', Merry adopted the pen-name 'Leonardo', which he used to correspond with Mary Robinson as 'Laura'. Robinson herself also wrote as 'Laura Maria' and 'Horace Juvenal', as well as using her real name in print. Jerome McGann states that the "romantic" poems of the Della Cruscans [...] are literally "theatrical" works; they call attention to themselves as artistic constructs', and in this context the pseudonyms of Merry and his coterie function as fictional characters in the theatre of Della Cruscanism.²⁵

²² Strachan, *BS* vol. 4, p. 188. The *DBR* dates 'The Interview' to 1798, but this is a misprint, as Merry died in that year and had long since given up his amatory correspondence with Cowley.

²³ Robert Merry, *The Interview*, in *ibid.*, pp. 188-191, l. 43 and l. 54.

²⁴ Merry, *The Interview*, l. 91, l. 101 and l. 40.

²⁵ Jerome McGann, 'The Literal World of the English Della Cruscans' in Elaine Scarry (ed.), *Fins de Siècle: English Poetry in 1590, 1690, 1790, 1890, 1990* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 95-121, here p. 119.

Similarly, John Mee argues that ‘for Merry, literature was, as an intrinsically sociable activity, an aspect of “mutual Converse”’.²⁶ Gifford exploits Merry and his followers’ tendency towards literary dialogue, turning it back on them by including the literary responses of his targets in the later editions of his satires. The best example of this is Gifford’s reproduction of the poem ‘Epitaph on a mouse’, by ‘Edwin’. Gifford attributed this poem to Thomas Vaughan, who later vehemently denied the accusation in *The Oracle*, only to find that his furious denial was then reprinted below Gifford’s reproduction of ‘Edwin’s’ poem. Vaughan asks Gifford,

And so the PROFOUND Mr T. Vaughan, as you politely style him, writes under the alluring signature of Edwin does he? and [sic] therefore a very proper subject for your satiric malignity! – But suppose for a moment, as the *truth* and the *fact* is, that this gentleman never did use that signature upon any occasion, in whatever he may have written.²⁷

Undeterred, Gifford appended this extract with the assertion that

when a gentleman does not know what he writes, it is a little hard to expect him to know what he reads. After all, Edwin or not, our egregious friend is still the PROFOUND Mr T. Vaughan.²⁸

Evidently, Gifford is more concerned here with raising the hackles of his target than providing any serious critique of Vaughan’s work. He subtly admits that it doesn’t even matter if Vaughan wrote the Edwin piece or not – Gifford is still going to provoke him. By reproducing Vaughan’s response, he claims ownership of it, holding up his own defence as a weapon against him. The dismissively sarcastic final word that, ‘After all, Edwin or not, our egregious friend is still the

²⁶ Mee, ““Reciprocal expressions of kindness”: Robert Merry and Della Cruscanism’ in Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite (eds.) *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain 1770-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 104-122, here p. 107.

²⁷ Thomas Vaughan, reproduced in *The Baviad*, p. 29, n. 1.

²⁸ Gifford, *The Baviad*, pp. 29-30, n. 1.

PROFOUND Mr T. Vaughan'²⁹ reiterates the point that whether Vaughan was the author of the 'Epitaph on a Mouse' or not is irrelevant. Gifford has provoked Vaughan into an indignant response which Gifford then appropriates for himself, ridiculing Vaughan not for his authorship of the poem, but for rising to the bait.

2.1 Corruption, Politics, and Reptile Imagery in *The Baviad*

By goading figures such as Vaughan, *The Baviad* creates a dialogue between Gifford and his targets, in a similar way that Merry and Cowley engaged in a poetic dialogue in the late 1780s. By significantly altering his satires with every new edition he keeps them in a state of flux, which creates a model of satiric dialogue that encourages the objects of his satires to respond. However, it is in these responses that his attacks are legitimised, as his targets are caught up in the web of a dialogic trap that Gifford has set. As with the satirists who 'borrow' pig and bull imagery from each other, Gifford and Robinson consistently use the same imagery for their attacks and counter-attacks. In contrast to swine and bull imagery, which gradually acquires meanings through repeated use throughout the period, Robinson and Gifford exploit the inherent qualities of metaphors such as reptiles (venomous, disgusting) and insects (small, insignificant) to publicly belittle each other.

This is in stark contrast to the comparatively sophisticated appropriation and manipulation of political metaphors evidenced in the first two chapters, and indeed, where pig and bull metaphors gradually acquire and develop their meaning throughout the period, there is no real attempt to alter the connotations of reptile and insect imagery. Rather, they are available to Gifford and his rivals fully formed, appearing, seemingly, as blunt instruments of character

²⁹ Gifford, *The Baviad*, p. 30, n. 1.

assassination. What is important, however, about the way that Gifford and his rivals use reptile and insect imagery is their constant eliciting of contemporary political connotations. In particular, Gifford uses reptile imagery to draw links between the Della Cruscans' supposed rejection of literary authority, and the threat of a revolution in England. Indeed, in the reptile imagery of *The Baviad*, there are echoes of Burke's warning against the destruction of political tradition and precedent, but instead of the anarchy of a swinish multitude, Gifford draws on the fear of the insidious, corruptive poison of the toad and the snake. What is particularly interesting about this imagery is that while it consistently, and consciously, suggests that his work is simply an attack on a group of artistic rivals, it is loaded with political agendas and rhetoric.

W.N. Hargreaves-Mawdsley has asserted that Gifford's attacks on the Della Cruscans are 'out of all proportion to the subject', and that 'there were many worse poets for him to deal with'.³⁰ Undoubtedly, the poetry of the Della Cruscans is never as nonsensical or as incoherent as Gifford claims, and in that respect Gifford's attacks are out of proportion. However, Gifford is frequently less concerned about the quality of the verses, than with their contemporary popularity, and for someone in contempt of the poetry, his fury is proportionate. Hargreaves-Mawdsley argues that the Della Cruscans were

literary scapegoats in a political witch-hunt [...] Merry and his coterie [...] had transgressed against the reactionary policy with which Pitt and his many followers, defending the whig [sic] revolution of 1688, faced the French Revolution [...] There was to hand a man, the loyal of the loyal, the faithful of the faithful, and his name was William Gifford.³¹

³⁰ Hargreaves-Mawdsley op. cit., p. 243.

³¹ Ibid., p. 244.

Gifford saw himself as the self-appointed defender of the political establishment, protecting it against the machinations of radicals and Jacobins such as the Della Cruscans. Gifford's introduction to *The Baviad* shows that it is not difficult to see why. He presents the Della Cruscans' popularity as a 'fever' sweeping across the nation, like a contagious madness:

The [Della Cruscan] fever turned to a frenzy [...] and a thousand nameless names caught the infection; and from one end of the kingdom to the other, all was nonsense and Della Crusca.³²

Gifford overtly characterises the Della Cruscans as a disease of literature, spreading with virulent fury. Using this metaphor is crucial in Gifford's politicisation of the Della Cruscans' popularity: Gifford draws parallels between the subversion of a healthy body by corruptive diseases, and the subversion of the body politic by corrupt literature. With the country in the grip of a malady such as this, someone had to act, but

Even THEN I [Gifford] waited with a patience which I can better account for, than excuse, for some one (abler than myself) to step forth to correct the growing depravity of the public taste [...] As no one appeared, and as the evil grew every day more alarming [...] I determined [...] to try what could be effected by my feeble power.³³

Gifford portrays himself here as the reluctant saviour of literature, stepping forward not for personal reasons, but from a sense of duty to his kingdom, and because, evidently, no one else is prepared to do it. The delight that he takes in demolishing the Della Cruscans, however, is evident: Gifford's additions, revisions and new footnotes give the poem the sense of an anecdote interrupted by the constant digressions of an over-excited speaker. Furthermore, descriptions

³²Gifford, *The Baviad*, pp. 4-5.

³³Ibid., p. 5.

such as ‘in splay-foot madrigals their powers combine’, ‘snivelling Jerningham’, or ‘See Parsons, while all sound advice he scorns, / Mistake two soft excrescences for horns’ are rather at odds with Gifford’s pretensions to being an objective, dutiful public critic.³⁴ Rather, his work is more a series of gleeful, personal attacks on the Della Cruscans, than a criticism of their poetry. Moreover, the language in Gifford’s introduction betrays both his personal desire to bring down the house of Della Crusca, and the political motivations that pervade *The Baviad* throughout. For example, his use of the word ‘kingdom’ when he describes the Della Cruscan as an epidemic hints at a jingoist or nationalist agenda – the group that were to become known as the Della Cruscans began writing collaboratively in Italy, where Merry, Bertie Greatheed, Hester Thrale Piozzi and William Parsons produced a collection called *The Florence Miscellany*. Gifford’s language suggests that the Della Cruscans, freshly corrupted from the continent, arrive on the shores of the ‘Kingdom’ of Britannia, spreading their profligate verses like plague rats from trade ships, or more appropriately, like Jacobins spreading revolutionary ideas. It is no coincidence that several of the Della Cruscans, including Merry and Robinson, in poems such as Merry’s *The Laurel of Liberty*, or Robinson’s *Ainsi va le Monde*, were openly sympathetic to the French Revolution, if only at its early, idealistic stages.

The date that Gifford published his satire further points towards his political motivations. Although the Della Cruscans published their first collection, *The Florence Miscellany*, in 1785, Gifford did not write his *Baviad* until 1791. He gives two explanations for this, neither of which is completely satisfactory. Firstly, he claims that, because the *Miscellany* was originally intended only for private circulation, ‘there was not much harm’ in the Della

³⁴ Gifford, *The Baviad*, pp. 8-11, ll. 9, 21, and 29-30, respectively.

Cruscans ‘scribbling high-flown panegyrics on themselves’.³⁵ However, as Gifford explains, ‘folly is progressive, [and the group] soon wrought themselves into an opinion that the fine things were really deserved’.³⁶ Accordingly, someone needed to expose their folly, but Gifford claims to have waited for some other, worthier, instructor to teach Merry and his followers their lesson. By 1791 no one else had yet taken up the burden, so it was, as he tells his readers, left to Gifford to censure the group. Michael Gamer suggests that the true cause of Gifford’s spleen, and the real reason he waited until 1791 to publish *The Baviad*, was not what the Della Cruscans published, but where they published it. Although Merry and his friends initially circulated their poems amongst themselves in *The Florence Miscellany*, verses from this collection were soon printed in the pages of *The World* magazine. These were rapidly followed by a love affair printed in verse in *The World*, between Merry and Hannah Cowley, who did not meet in person until 1789. All of this was over, however, two years before Gifford wrote *The Baviad*. Gamer argues that Gifford’s reasoning that he was waiting ‘for some one (abler than myself) to step forth’ ‘is hardly convincing [...] The explanation, of course, “accounts for” little’.³⁷ The real reason, Gamer posits, that Gifford waited so long to publish his attack had more to do with the Della Cruscans’ publisher, John Bell, than the quality of the verses themselves. Bell was known for his ornate, attractively bound books, and his treatment of the Della Cruscan volumes was to be no different.³⁸ He presented the Della Cruscans as poets worthy of ‘proper’ publication. The ‘implication made through the book’s printing and title [...] is that the poets contained in Bell’s *British*

³⁵Gifford, *The Baviad*, p. 3.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Michael Gamer, ‘Bell’s Poetics: The Baviad, the Della Cruscans, and the Book of the World’, in Jones (ed.), *The Satiric Eye*, pp. 31-53, here pp. 44-5.

³⁸Ibid., p. 47.

Album possess a merit at least analogous to the poets of other Bell books'.³⁹

Gamer highlights the fact that Gifford attacks Bell more than any other individual:

For Gifford, [...] Bell's attempts to repackage Della Cruscan verse into high cultural artefacts amounted to multiple usurpations of literary authority: of the poetic "work" by improvised, self-consuming verse, of book by newspaper, and of critic by bookseller.⁴⁰

Gamer presents a compelling argument that nicely addresses the disparity between the time of the original Della Cruscan rage, and the publication of *The Baviad*. Bell's and the Della Cruscans' 'usurpations of literary authority' is crucial to our understanding of Gifford's motives, as this usurpation constitutes a political act in itself. It is tempting to read a specifically Tory-based politics into *The Baviad*, but Gifford was not strongly linked to the Tory party until 1797. However, what underpins both his editorship at the *Anti-Jacobin* and his satires is a hatred for those who would subvert authority. For Gifford, the Della Cruscans represent both the political and artistic subversion of the authority he wants to protect.

In addition, it is interesting that two of the most pro-revolutionary Della Cruscan poems, *The Laurel of Liberty* and *Ainsi va le Monde*, were published only the previous year to *The Baviad*, whereas the 'folly' of the less political Della Cruscan verses had been in print since 1787. Gifford's explanation for waiting to publish his attack ultimately does not make sense. If the poetry in itself offended him so badly, why did he not attack it earlier, before its 'frenzy' gripped the reading nation? If, as he suggests, Gifford was waiting for a more

³⁹ Gamer, op. cit., p. 47.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 48.

able critic to take the burden, why does the supposedly reluctant Gifford take so much delight in destroying his targets? The answer is because, although Gifford clearly detests the Della Cruscans' poetry in its own right, and its subversion of poetic tradition and authority, he is moved to attack them only after they openly cry support for the French Revolution, and against the kind of authoritarian politics that Gifford espouses.

Another of Gifford's targets in *The Baviad* was the satirist John Williams, who wrote under the pen name 'Anthony Pasquin'. Although Williams was not part of the Della Cruscan coterie, Gifford attacked him along with the Della Cruscans for the same ostensible reason of preserving the health of English literature. After attacking Williams, Gifford admits in his revised introduction to *The Baviad* that the poem

was directed against the wretched taste of the followers of the *Cruscan* school [...] In this I should have persevered to the end, had I not been provoked to transgress the bounds prescribed to myself, by the diabolical conduct of one of my heroes, the notorious *Anthony Pasquin*.⁴¹

Williams subsequently brought a libel suit against the *The Baviad's* publisher Robert Faulder, but Williams' own background as a satirist and theatre critic led to Faulder's defence reading out extracts of Williams' own libellous satires. The court then non-suited the case, and Williams emigrated to New York in disgrace.⁴² In the 1800 edition of *The Baviad*, Gifford refers to the failed suit, stating that,

If we did not know the horror which these obscure reptiles, who fatten on the filthy dregs of slander and obscenity, feel at being forced into day, we might be

⁴¹ Gifford, *The Baviad*, p. 5.

⁴² Strachan, 'Biographical Directory', in *BS* vol. 4, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii.

justly surprised, that a man who lived by violating the law, should have recourse to it for protection.⁴³

Reptiles like Williams gorge themselves on slander, and must be dragged into the light of day in order to expose their corrupting influence on society. Of course, it falls on Gifford to drag ‘this pest before the public, and [set] him up to view in his true light’.⁴⁴ Williams is not only a fattened, filthy reptile, but also ‘obscure’; insignificant but for his attempts to pervert justice and corrupt the world into protecting criminals with the law. Moreover, the phrase ‘these reptiles’ suggests that Williams is simply one of many that must be rooted out and exposed to the public view.

Whilst Gifford’s attack here does not appear to be on Williams’ political leanings, he implies a connection between the ‘dregs of slander’ on which Williams has fattened himself, and the radical satirists who were prosecuted for libel throughout the 1790s. Gifford presents an ideal legal system as one that will not tolerate any violation of its authority or principles, and that will ‘force’ transgressors into the unforgiving light of ‘day’. Any compromise of this position, Gifford suggests, would see the judiciary corrupted into a system where ‘a man who lived by violating the law, should have recourse to it for protection’. Gifford therefore links the image of reptiles gorging themselves ‘on the filthy dregs of slander and obscenity’ with the paradoxical notion that a criminal can hide behind the law for protection. At the time of re-writing the 1820 edition of *The Baviad* that this extract appeared in, Gifford had already been the editor of the *Anti-Jacobin*, and was in receipt of his Government pensions. He is writing, therefore, in the role of the state-sanctioned satirist. He installs himself as a

⁴³ Gifford, *The Baviad*, p. 6.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

representative of public and state interest, protecting the establishment from the dangerous influence of figures like Williams, and so to seek out and expose the ‘obscure reptiles’ of slander has clear political connotations.

What is interesting, however, is that in using reptile imagery to portray Williams, Gifford draws attention away from any overt political statement. Gifford’s political allegiances are frequently attacked by his satiric enemies, and we can read Gifford’s use of reptile imagery here as an attempt to distract attention from the political undertones of his statement. Gifford’s portrayal of Williams personalises the attack in a way so that the commentary on radicals abusing the legal system becomes buried under the disgusting metaphors of slimy reptiles. Ironically, this makes Gifford’s political statement all the more effective: in presenting a personal anecdote using disgusting, almost emotive imagery, the reader sympathises with Gifford’s depiction of injustice, and is subsequently directed into compliance with the politics that underpin it.

Gifford uses the motif of reptiles inhabiting the dark corners of corruption against many of his targets, and the image of the reptile as disgusting, corruptive and noxious is consistent throughout the period’s satire. Similar to his attack on Williams, Gifford defended Pope’s poetry against the critic Joseph Weston in *The Baviad*, who had criticised Pope in letters and articles printed in *The Gentleman’s Magazine*.⁴⁵ Gifford describes Weston,

who slunk from truth’s imperious light,
Swells, like a filthy toad, with secret spite,
And envying the fame he cannot hope,
Spits his black venom at the dust of Pope.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Strachan, *BS vol. 4*, p. 345, n. 222.

⁴⁶ Gifford, *The Baviad*, p. 24, ll. 248-251.

In the same way that he positions himself as the defender of justice in the Williams lawsuit, Gifford appoints himself guardian of literature and art against the ‘Reptile accurs’d’ of Weston.⁴⁷ For Gifford, these positions are identical – both requiring him to use ‘truth’s imperious light’ to expose the corruption of institutions as sacred as justice and art. By linking his attacks on Williams and Weston with the same reptilian imagery, Gifford is suggesting that as much as the corruption of justice is a political issue, so is the degeneration of art.

The Baviad refers explicitly to Alexander Pope’s *The Dunciad*: Gifford’s extensive use of footnotes mirrors Pope’s, and that *The Baviad* is a ‘*Paraphrastic Imitation of the First Satire of Persius*’ points to an imitation of Pope’s own remodelling of classical satire. Furthermore, Gifford’s title refers to the third book of *The Dunciad*, where ‘on the banks of Lethe, the souls of the dull are dipped by Bavius, before their entrance into this world’.⁴⁸ By referring to Pope’s ‘Bavius’, Gifford suggests that his own satire is a cleansing pool that will wash away not only ‘dullness’, but also corruption from contemporary literature. Moreover, by overtly mirroring Pope’s satiric form, Gifford implicitly ties the same politics to his satire that informed Pope’s attacks on the Whigs in *The Dunciad*. Undoubtedly, Gifford sees himself as the (would-be) successor to Pope’s position as Tory satirist.

2.2 Snakes, insects and insignificance in Robinson’s *Modern Manners*

Where Gifford attacks the critic Weston using corruptive, reptile imagery, the prominent Della Cruscan Mary Robinson uses reptilian imagery as a metaphor for impermanence when she attacks modish, hack critics, in her poem *Modern*

⁴⁷ Gifford, *The Baviad*, p. 24, l. 252.

⁴⁸ Pope, *The Dunciad, Book the Third, Argument*, in Herbert Davis (ed.), *Poetical Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 525.

Manners. She sarcastically thanks ‘the lab’ring reptiles’⁴⁹ of criticism ‘for their pains’⁵⁰, as the ‘dullest sland’rers, make the wisest read’⁵¹. To ensure we know exactly who she is referring to, Robinson begins her poem by describing

these enlightened times, when critic elves
Attack each wit, less barb’rous than themselves
[...]
Who arm’d in paper panoply, stalk forth,
The calm assassins of *poetic* worth!⁵²

The term ‘critic elves’ is a reference to Gifford, indicating both his mischievousness and his diminutive size. Although Gifford was not employed by the Government until 1797, Robinson uses the term ‘assassins’ to suggest a Gifford’s links to the establishment, and the preceding word ‘calm’ highlights Robinson’s contempt for Gifford. The phrase creates an image of Gifford detachedly ‘assassinating’ characters with his pen, smugly congratulating himself on his own righteousness. Published in 1793, *Modern Manners* came four years before Gifford was commissioned with editing the *Anti-Jacobin*, but Robinson’s metaphor still works if not taken to mean someone who has been directly hired by the government: Gifford is certainly defending the literary establishment against, as he sees it, the new-fangled school of Della Crusca, who by implication, threaten the political establishment as well. This is because when the Della Cruscans challenge literary conventions, Gifford sees an attack on the concept of all establishments and hierarchy in society, art, and politics.

Robinson uses her retaliation against Gifford as a spring-board for a wider attack on fashionable society, and so approximately a third of the way

⁴⁹ Robinson, *Modern Manners*, p. 93, l. 52.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 93, l. 50.

⁵² Ibid., p. 92, ll. 1-6.

through the first of two cantos, Robinson moves away from attacking Gifford towards a broader criticism of modish society. She shifts quite quickly from a portrayal of ‘the poor Muses, [who are] dragg’d from their abodes, / [to be] hash’d, and fritter’d, - into *Patent Odes*’, to ‘many a flippant Miss, with simp’ring look, / Well read in every learned – *Modern Book*’.⁵³ Linking her attacks on Gifford and fashionable society is her use of animal imagery throughout the poem. That she moves away from Gifford so early on in the poem is a comment in itself, both on the nature of ephemeral, fashionable writing, and on the perceived insignificance of Gifford himself. Robinson paints all fashion, whether trendy modern literature or modish wardrobes, as the same ‘busy, empty restless thing’.⁵⁴ She contrasts the idealism of ‘Simplicity, who quaffs the mountain breeze, / Nor knows the ills of luxury and ease’ with

The rending pangs that riot in the breast,
 With all *Golconda’s* starry mischiefs drest,
 With burning *rubies*, *blushing* to be borne
 On *caitiff bosoms*, which their rays adorn:
 ‘So *poisons* lurk beneath the *flow’ry* brake;
 So shining *beauties* decorate the Snake.’⁵⁵

At the heart of this is the image of a gilded, poisonous snake that lurks beneath fashion’s outward flowers. Fashion is a glittering, attractive, but deadly bauble, where rubies burn the wearer and the diamonds of the legendary mines of Golconda in India are ‘starry mischiefs’. The eroticism typically associated with Della Cruscan verse is evident here, with the ‘*rubies* [that are] *blushing* to be borne / On *caitiff bosoms*’. However, in contrast to Merry and Cowley’s amatory verses, that celebrate physical eroticism, Robinson’s erotic imagery is tied to the

⁵³ Robinson *Modern Manners.*, p. 94, ll. 111-112, and p. 95, ll. 119-120, respectively.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 97, l. 235.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 98, ll. 246-252.

snake of fashion. Robinson hints at the biblical temptation, suggesting that to embrace the glittering, '*beauties*' of fashion is also to beckon its impermanence, and symbolic death.

Robinson positions fashion as a 'Destructive reptile, of camelion pow'r, / That feeds on air, and changes with the hour'.⁵⁶ Like a chameleon, it routinely and arbitrarily changes appearance because fashion is neither solid nor tangible: it is an abstraction, finding expression only in the things it deems as in the mode. However, this is also, as Robinson suggests, fashion's weakness. Just as its colours change, so does its chameleon power, lasting only for a short time and, implicitly, harming no one who recognises its transitory nature. Robinson ties this to her depiction of satirists like Gifford, who despite their best efforts to destroy the poetic efforts of great writers (evidently numbering herself among them) cannot escape the maxim that 'The shaft of *Satire* cannot wound the dead'.⁵⁷ Satire, derisively italicised, is unable to harm the dead; those who exist outside of the immediate, ephemeral moment, who do not write according to the living, mortal fashion of the hour.

It is significant that in her attack on satire, Robinson adopts the pseudonym 'Horace Juvenal', after the Roman satirists and namesakes of the Horatian and Juvenalian satiric modes.⁵⁸ Robinson adopts this *nom de plume* as an ironic statement on the topical, and therefore temporary, nature of satire, and a subsequent assertion that posterity will grace her poem over the critics and satirists (specifically Gifford) that attack her. It is also worth acknowledging that in satirising the topicality of satirists such as Gifford, Robinson leaves herself

⁵⁶ Robinson, *Modern Manners*, p. 103, l. 113-114.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 101, l. 2.

⁵⁸ Briefly, Horatian satire is comic, light-hearted and generally inoffensive, whereas Juvenalian satire is harsh, indignant and tends to have a more moral or serious political undertone. For more on the Juvenalian and Horatian modes and their associated politics, see Dyer, op. cit., pp. 1, 3-4 and 39-62.

vulnerable to that same topicality. However, although references to Gifford's size leave no doubt over her target, Robinson is careful not to mention names, and with the exception of the French Revolution, specific events or fashions. She thereby avoids, to an extent, being confined to her own contexts, which preserves at least part of her claim to posterity.

It is in the closing stanzas of the poem that Robinson applies the image of transitory fashion to her disillusionment with the French Revolution. She describes the 'beauteous Dames! the boast of modern times, / Who *ape* the French – yet *shudder* at their crimes'.⁵⁹ The phrase 'modern times' has a dual meaning, that of contemporary fashion, and of the political horrors being committed in France. Tying the two in one image, Robinson exposes the hypocrisy of the modish 'beauteous Dames', and ties the symbolic mortality of fashion to the atrocities of the revolution. This stems directly from the reptile imagery Robinson employs earlier in the poem, in the way that that image in particular represents fashion as a metaphor for not only affectation in society, but also for impermanence and death.

Despite this, there are elements of irony in Robinson's reptile imagery. Using the reptile metaphor to represent fashion as inherently transient disempowers the image. Although fashion is represented as a venomous snake in the grass, it is possible to simply ignore it, rendering it effectively impotent. Fashion is 'preposterous': it is to be ridiculed, not feared.⁶⁰ Although the dangerous 'Imp' of fashion is described as the 'destructive reptile, of camelion pow'r'⁶¹ and the 'Insidious monster of infernal birth',⁶² the irony of this

⁵⁹ Robinson, *Modern Manners*, p. 105, ll. 183-184.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 103, l. 109.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.103, l. 113.

⁶² *Ibid.*, l. 111.

grandiose and faux-terrifying language is clear: the immense, dangerous power, the grand, frightening significance of the reptile metaphor, as with all fashion, is ultimately transitory. This imagery can be traced back to Robinson's attacks on Gifford in the opening stanzas. She refers to Gifford as one of a group of 'lab'ring reptiles',⁶³ who

Like morning dew, they glitter for an hour,
Dim every leaf – and sadden every flower;
'Till *Sol* consigns them to their native dirt,
To *renovate* the root they could not *hurt*.⁶⁴

Critics such as Gifford are merely of the moment, glittering briefly before being outshone by the light of posterity.

Robinson invests *Modern Manners* with a sense that despite the labours of 'critic elves' such as Gifford, true poetry will still succeed, as 'only dunces are by dunces prais'd'.⁶⁵ In a clear reference to Gifford's mirroring of Pope, Robinson represents Gifford as a Popean dunce, himself bathed by Bavius in the waters of Lethe. By acknowledging Gifford's Popean influences and ridiculing him with them Robinson undercuts Gifford's pretensions to being Pope's successor as the period's high satirist. If Gifford, refigured not as Pope's satiric heir but as one of his dunces, were to praise a poem, it would be a sure guarantee of its low merit. There is, however, a circularity to this rhetoric: it seems that Gifford is only a dunce because he does not praise the Della Cruscans, but Robinson is implying that were it offered, she would shy away from Gifford's praise, because of his dunce-status. This flawed logic can be accounted for in the sense of injury that Robinson displays where she is attacking Gifford: in this

⁶³Robinson, *Modern Manners*, p. 93, l. 52.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 93, ll. 59-60.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 94, l. 104.

section of the poem she is not offering a watertight critique of Gifford's ability as a critic – she is merely retaliating to his attacks on her. Indeed, Strachan has commented that 'the woman who had endured Gifford's jibes about her crutches does not scruple to attack Gifford on grounds of his diminutive size'.⁶⁶ Size (or the lack of it) is a recurrent metaphor throughout the period's satire – Napoleon is an obvious contemporary target for this, as Theresa M. Kelly notes in her article, 'J.M.W. Turner, Napoleonic Caricature, and Romantic Allegory': Napoleon's size is satirised as an object, 'presented in exaggerated or reduced scale. He is either a colossus or a miniature, toy-like figure, monkey, a Corsican fly, a toad, a shuttlecock, or a tiny fairy.'⁶⁷ There is a play here on not only Napoleon's inflated ego and 'large' ambitions, with Kelly noting Napoleon's 'colossal persona', but also on his real-life diminutive stature.⁶⁸ Nor is it only the physically small who receive such treatment: in the wood engraving 'WARREN'S BLACK-RAT BLACKING' George Cruikshank modifies his own advertisement for the famous Warren's Blacking boot polish to diminish the high pretensions of Charles Warren, 'a Tory aspirant to the judiciary'.⁶⁹ Cruikshank's print transforms Charles Warren into a tiny rat, admiring its reflection in a boot, where it ridiculously wears a Justice's wig. Warren's judicial aspirations receive two blows: he is not just reduced to the level of an animal, but to that of vermin, and one so small that it is dwarfed by only a man's boot.

Indeed, Robinson is not averse to ridiculing Gifford's diminutive size. She uses insect imagery to suggest that Gifford's literary criticism equates to the buzzing of flies: annoying but unimportant. Robinson jeers at Gifford and critics

⁶⁶ Strachan, *BS vol. 4*, p. 91.

⁶⁷ Theresa M. Kelly, 'J.M.W. Turner, Napoleonic Caricature, and Romantic Allegory' in *ELH*, 58:2 (Summer 1991), pp. 351-82, here p. 355.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 357.

⁶⁹ Strachan, *Advertising and Satirical Culture*, p. 93.

of his kind, writing, ‘Did ye but know what wretched things ye are, / [...] You’d shrink to grubs, from grubs you’d fade away, / The short-liv’d *insects* of a *short-liv’d day*!’⁷⁰ Like fashion, these critics are ‘short-liv’d’, and though they have influence in their day, posterity will show them to be no more than ‘grubs’. Furthermore, Robinson is careful to distance herself from accusations of temporary fame, by aligning herself with Alexander Pope and his *Dunciad*. She claims that in writing his satire,

[He] knew, that *honey* catches *greedy flies*,
 His lines, *Medusa-like*, so sweetly shone,
 That every *leaden* head was turned to *stone*!
 The cunning poet, triumph’d o’er their shame,
 And on their senseless noddles *built his fame*!
 Though legions every day, his pen subdu’d,
 Each morn beheld, unfledg’d, a gaping brood:
 Like bees, around the *Bard*, the wretched things
 Buzz’d in his ears, and threatn’d with their stings.⁷¹

Robinson categorizes Pope’s work as a trap, laden with honey, to catch and ridicule foolish, insect-like critics. Robinson, implicitly, models herself on this image, suggesting that satirists, such as Gifford, are equally as insignificant and harmless.

The metaphor is almost identical to one she had already used in her 1790 poem *Ainsi va le Monde*, which she wrote as a complimentary response to Merry’s pro-revolutionary *Laurel of Liberty*. In her poem, Robinson, writing under the pseudonym, ‘Laura Maria’, compares Merry favourably to ‘Immortal SHAKESPERE [who] gleams across the sight’ and states that ‘Wing’d Ages picture to the dazzled view / Each mark’d perfection – of the sacred few, / POPE,

⁷⁰ Robinson, *Modern Manners*, p. 102, l. 49-52.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 93, l. 63-76.

DRYDEN, SPENSER, all that Fame shall raise / From CHAUCER'S gloom –
till MERRY'S lucid days'.⁷² She goes on to caution Merry that

timid genius, [...]
Steals from the world, content the few to please
[...]
The proud enthusiast shuns promiscuous praise,
The Idiot's smile condemns the Poet's lays.⁷³

These lines foreground Robinson's scoffing at Gifford's praise in *Modern Manners*. She illustrates this point, as she does in *Modern Manners*, with the image of

The buzzing hornets [that] swarm about the great
[...] The trifling, flutt'ring insects of a day,
Flit near the sun, and glitter in its ray
[...] Where every servile fool may have his turn.⁷⁴

These lines from *Ainsi va le Monde* could easily have come from *Modern Manners*, so similar are the images. In *Ainsi va le Monde*, Robinson uses the image to both compliment Merry on his poetry, and to suggest that his poetic genius is as transcendent and permanent as the politics that he espouses in his *Laurel of Liberty*, tying poetry and politics together as one, permanent entity. In the light of *Ainsi va le Monde*, the encoded politics of *Modern Manners*' insect imagery is revealed. *Ainsi va le Monde* is an espousal of French Revolutionary principles, appealing to the French self-styled 'Patriots' who led the Revolution, and advocating the 'Celestial Freedom [that] warms the breast of man'.⁷⁵ In contrast, three years after *Ainsi va le Monde* was published, *Modern Manners* concludes with Robinson's disillusionment at the bloodshed in France. Robinson

⁷² Robinson, *Ainsi va le Monde*, p. 220, ll. 113-118.

⁷³ Ibid., ll. 123-128.

⁷⁴ Ibid., ll. 133-8.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 220, l. 152, and p. 221, l. 157.

criticises the hypocrisy that she sees in the fashionable society that ‘ape[s] the French, - yet shudder[s] at their crimes’, and then directly attacks ‘The dreadful havock made by Anarchy’.⁷⁶ However, both poems position permanence in art and politics against the transitory, the ‘short-liv’d insects’ of the moment. The way that Robinson essentially recycles the insects from *Ainsi va le Monde* in *Modern Manners* allows her to comment not only on the transience of the French Revolution, but also on Gifford as both fashionable critic and modish politician.

The beginning of *Modern Manners* focuses on attacking Gifford as a hack critic, moving towards Robinson’s tying together the impermanence of both English fashion and bloody revolution at its conclusion. However, in the middle section of the poem, Robinson focuses on domestic, rather than critical or artistic fashions, and so accordingly she adopts more domestic bestial metaphors, particularly birds. She describes, for example, the ‘thrice feather’d’ belles of modish society, who flaunt themselves like peacocks.⁷⁷ The tone of Robinson’s poem is somewhat unsteady, beginning with the indignant lines on the reptilian poisons of modish critics, but later moving on to the self-assured confidence at their insect-like insignificance.

By emphasising the insignificant, short lives of insects, Robinson ties the transience of fashion to contemporary politics. Although in using insect imagery her direct attack is on the pointlessness of satirists such as Gifford, her discussion of the French Revolution alongside the ugliness of fashion ties the short life-span of the insects to the ‘beauteous Dames’⁷⁸ who sympathise with the Revolution by proxy by aping French fashions.⁷⁹ This contrasts with her previous espousal of

⁷⁶ Robinson, *Modern Manners*, p. 105, ll. 184 and 186, respectively.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 101, l. 35.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 105, ll. 183-184.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

revolutionary principles in *Ainsi va le Monde*, where she likens critics of the pro-revolutionary Merry to insects, tying them to anti-revolutionary modishness. *Modern Manners* to an extent disavows Robinson's sympathy for the Revolution, and there is a certain irony to her criticising people for supporting a cause which she supported only three years earlier. However, in both *Ainsi va le Monde* and *Modern Manners* Robinson uses the image of flitting, transient insects in the same way: to associate society's artistic, critical and fashionable trends with questionable, modish politics.

Robinson's *Modern Manners* is largely a disavowal of the revolutionary ideals she had earlier espoused in *Ainsi va le Monde*, and highlights the hypocrisies and ephemerality of fashionable English society in the 1790s. Her attack on Gifford, equally, is an attack on the transient nature of criticism, and of Gifford's authoritarian politics. However, because Gifford did not establish any direct ties to the Tories until later, with his editorships of the *Anti-Jacobin* and the *Quarterly Review*, it was not until the first decades of the nineteenth century that Gifford was openly criticised as a Tory satirist.

3.1 A Piccadilly Rivalry: Gifford and Wolcot

One of the first examples of Gifford's ties to the Tories being satirised is in Wolcot's *Out at Last* which although a satire on Pitt's first exit as Prime Minister in 1801, criticised Gifford's links with the Tories in an extended footnote. *Out at Last* was the culmination of an animosity that began the previous year, in August 1800. The satiric exchanges between Gifford and Wolcot easily rival *The Baviad* for sheer personal nastiness and fury, but, moreover, mirror the thinly veiled politics of Gifford's attacks on the Della Cruscans. Gifford's rivalry with Wolcot began on the page, but spilled out into the real world in the form of a physical

fight held at a Piccadilly bookshop, where the two met on 18 August 1800. There are several versions of the encounter, predictably differing depending on which side is telling the story. However, the most likely, and more generally accepted account is that Wolcot discovered Gifford in the bookshop. He approached him and asked his name, but before waiting for a reply Wolcot set about Gifford with his cane. Gifford, despite being smaller and apparently weaker, relieved Wolcot of his weapon and returned the thrashing, driving Wolcot out of the shop and leaving him to flee down Piccadilly.⁸⁰ The irony of this episode is that it was largely the result of a case of mistaken identity. John Gifford, no relation to William, was responsible for a negative review of Wolcot's 1799 *Nil admirari, or a Smile at a Bishop*. Wolcot subsequently mistook John for William, and began to attack Gifford in his satires. This led Gifford to write his *Epistle to Peter Pindar*, a vicious and personal attack on Wolcot's character. Wolcot responded with an open letter that addressed Gifford as an 'Infamous Rascal', and ended with the threatening instruction to 'say your prayers [...] & god [sic] have mercy on your soul!!!'⁸¹ Gifford subsequently reproduced this letter with considerable delight in subsequent editions of his *Epistle*, which could only have stoked the fire of Wolcot's rage, and which ultimately led to the altercation in the Piccadilly bookshop.⁸²

In his *Epistle*, Gifford represents Wolcot's poetry as the work of a disgusting reptile. When he hears Wolcot's

deep-detested name,

⁸⁰ Strachan, *BS* vol. 4, p. 107.

⁸¹ Reproduced in facsimile in Gifford, *Epistle to Peter Pindar*, in *BS* vol. 4, p. 84.

⁸² Strachan, *BS* vol. 4, p. 107, and Benjamin Colbert, editor's introduction to 'Peter Pindar' (John Wolcot), *The Lousiad, an Heroi-Comic Poem*, in Colbert (ed.), *British Satire 1785-1840, Volume 3, Collected Satires III: Complete Longer Satires* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003), p. 5, hereafter referred to as *BS* vol. 3.

A shivering horror [creeps] through all [his] frame,
A damp, cold, chill, as if a snake or toad
[starts] unawares across [his] road'.⁸³

Gifford returns to the reptile imagery that characterised his attacks on the Della Crusicans, but W. B. Carnochan has argued that Gifford's critique of Wolcot amounts to no more than 'raucous schoolboy invective'. Moreover, Carnochan posits, Gifford's *Epistle to Peter Pindar* is 'no more subtle than to say how much he loathes [Wolcot]'.⁸⁴ In several ways this is true: Gifford's aim to lay waste his enemies' reputations and artistic output is a simple one, and, undoubtedly, the *Epistle* is a far more personal attack on Wolcot than *The Baviad* is on the Della Crusicans. Where *The Baviad* at least ostensibly criticises the Della Cruscan's poetry, Gifford makes no such attempt with his attacks on Wolcot. Gifford's *Epistle* never disguises its nature: in his poem, Gifford attacks the character, not the poetry, of Wolcot. He creates a general sense of revulsion, but does not justify or explain it in the way he does with the Della Crusicans. Gifford does not outwardly position Wolcot as corrupting art, or damaging justice. He attacks Wolcot not for his actions, but merely for his existence as a disgusting wretch. However, as the poem builds momentum, Gifford centres his criticisms on Wolcot's poetic output, announcing in the thirteenth of eighteen stanzas that

Lo, HERE THE REPTILE! who from some dark cell,
Where all his veins with native poison swell,
Crawls forth, a slimy toad, and spits, and spues,
The crude abortions of his loathsome muse,
On all that Genius, all that Worth holds dear,
Unsullied rank and piety sincere;
While idiot mirth the base defilement lauds,
And malice, with averted face, applauds!⁸⁵

⁸³ Gifford, *Epistle to Peter Pindar*, p. 80, ll. 43-4.

⁸⁴ W. B. Carnochan, 'Satire, Sublimity, and Sentiment: Theory and Practice in Post-Augustan Satire', in *PMLA*, 85:2 (March 1970), pp. 260-267, here p. 264.

⁸⁵ Gifford, *Epistle to Peter Pindar*, p. 82, ll. 125-132.

Here, Gifford levels his disgust at the ‘crude abortions’ of Wolcot’s ‘loathsome muse’, not sparing the rod as he employs as many disgusting adjectives as he can to attack his prey. Although Gifford seems to have finally arrived at an excuse for his attacks – Wolcot’s poetry – he circles around the writing itself, even more so than in his attacks on the Della Cruscans, and his criticisms remains entirely personal. However, this personal vindictiveness betrays Gifford’s political motivations. Importantly, those motivations are tied to his reptile imagery in exactly the same way as in *The Baviad*. Gifford depicts Wolcot as spitting out his ‘crude abortions’ on ‘Unsullied rank and piety sincere’: effectively, then, on hierarchy and authority. Gifford’s use of the word ‘piety’, and the preceding line ‘On all that Genius, all that Worth holds dear’, ostensibly distracts from the political tone of his invective, suggesting that Wolcot has transgressed more fundamental or religious boundaries. What this actually points towards, however, is Gifford’s own association between political and religious authority. If the Della Cruscans subverted literary authority, Wolcot has subverted the authority of decency itself: Wolcot’s revoltingness as a reptile or toad is fundamentally transgressive of the authorities of human decency, religion, and politics. Gifford denounces Wolcot as a

BRUTAL SOT! who, drench’d with gin,
 Lashes his wither’d nerves to tasteless sin;
 Squeals out (with oaths and blasphemies between)
 The impious song, the tale, the jest obscene;
 And careless views, amidst the barbarous roar,
 His few grey hairs strew, one by one, the floor!⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Gifford, *Epistle to Peter Pindar*, ll. 133-138.

Gifford ties religious language to that of artistic decency: Wolcot's 'sin' is 'tasteless'; he 'squeals out' an 'impious song' with 'oaths and blasphemies between', finishing with 'the jest obscene' and simply 'careless views'. With the Della Cruscans, Gifford equated artistic transgression with political subversion, and here he likens artistic transgression to religious blasphemy, and implicitly the disruption of political authority.

Gifford's motivations for attacking Wolcot are arguably more complex than for attacking the Della Cruscans in *The Baviad*. In that poem, Gifford uses reptile imagery to attack the group based on their artistic bankruptcy, linking their subversions of literary authority to political dissent. Although Gifford's attacks on the Della Cruscans are often personal, he never writes from a position of intimacy, knowing them only through their writings. In contrast, Gifford's first encounter with Wolcot was extremely personal as well as violent, and their subsequent mutual animosity in writing has its basis in that very personal encounter. Gifford's *Epistle* reflects this, opening with the taunt,

While many a NOBLE NAME to virtue dear,
Delights the public eye, the public ear,
And fills thy canker'd breast with such annoy,
As Satan felt from innocence and joy;
Why Peter, leave the hated object free,
And vent, poor driveller, all thy spite on me?⁸⁷

In these opening lines, Gifford suggests that Wolcot's rage against him is misdirected, and that he is merely jealous of the more talented 'noble names' that 'delight the public eye'. But this is more complex than a simple personal jibe – Gifford quickly introduces the religious language also found later in the poem. Moreover, religion and authority are identical: 'pure Religion's beam, [...] / O'er

⁸⁷ Gifford, *Epistle to Peter Pindar*, p. 79, ll. 1-6.

many a mitre sheds distinguish'd light'.⁸⁸ The high-ranking bishops, wearing mitres, receive the 'distinguish'd' light, reserved only for those in authority. Gifford strengthens this association between religion and authority with the next stanza:

While, with a radiance yet to courts unknown,
Calm, steady dignity surrounds the throne,
And the tried worth, the virtues of thy King,
Deep in thy soul infix the mortal sting [...]⁸⁹

Gifford presents the Church and Monarchy not only as the supreme forms of authority, but links them together with an ethereal 'radiance' unknown to mere courts. The radiant 'virtues of thy King', for the corrupt Wolcot, 'Deep in [his] soul infix the mortal sting'. Implicitly, the effect of this virtuous sting surfaces with Wolcot's vomiting 'abortions' in the fourteenth stanza, as his poisonous body rejects the 'virtues' of the King.

Although the rivalry between Gifford and Wolcot began with the Piccadilly encounter, Gifford's *Epistle* is written on the same basis as *The Baviad*: as an attack on the subversion of authority. The title page of the *Epistle*, with its sub-heading, 'By the Author of *The Baviad*', as well as acting as a marketing tool, also points to the continuation of the aims of Gifford's earlier satire. Dyer posits that Wolcot is the period's 'quintessential poet of opposition', commenting that he 'addressed and reached a wider audience than Gifford'.⁹⁰ Wolcot wrote poetry satirising the state and the monarchy, and is often described

⁸⁸ Gifford, *Epistle to Peter Pindar*, p. 79, ll. 7-8.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 79, ll. 13-16.

⁹⁰ Dyer, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

as a radical or reformist satirist, but, as Dyer suggests, ‘The politics of Wolcot’s poetry is a knotty issue’.⁹¹ However,

Although Wolcot often leaves obscure the precise political basis of his critique, the fire he drew makes us aware of the transgressive connotations not only of his poetry’s content – frequently satirizing George III and his ministers – but also of its form: its shunning the heroic couplet, its colloquial diction and tone.⁹²

Dyer’s description of the ‘transgressive connotations’ of the form of Wolcot’s poetry is reminiscent of the Della Cruscan poetry that Gifford saw as disrupting literary conventions. Furthermore, Wolcot ‘addressed a less elite readership, expressed a more Whiggish politics [than Gifford], and treated satire as a pleasant assertion of one’s wit rather than as a duty in a time of crisis’.⁹³ However, Wolcot was undoubtedly a more formidable opponent than the Della Crusicans, and his response to the *Epistle*, the poem *Out at Last*, demonstrates this. Although Wolcot’s main target in this satire is William Pitt, Wolcot goads Gifford in an extended footnote. As Hazlitt and Hunt would do later, Wolcot focuses his attack on Gifford’s ties to the Tory party:

He [Gifford] continues in his favourite occupation of administering as jackal to the constantly watering chops of the toothless old lion [William Pitt]. To use another figure, he is still his lordship’s gamekeeper, and guards the plump little partridges [...] with so much laudable assiduity from poachers, that he has been amply and gratefully remunerated with an honourable annuity from government!!!⁹⁴

Wolcot vilifies Gifford’s associations with the Tory party, suggesting that Gifford’s attacks are motivated purely by his political ties. However, Gifford was not directly linked to the Tory party until 1797 when he began editing the *Anti-*

⁹¹ Dyer, p. 33.

⁹² Ibid., p. 3.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 37.

⁹⁴ ‘Peter Pindar’ (John Wolcot), *Out at Last! Or, The Fallen Minister*, in *BS* vol. 4, p. 112, n.

Jacobin, but he was already attacking the Della Cruscans for their politics in 1791. This suggests that Gifford's satires were not motivated purely by party politics.

Furthermore, when Robinson attacks Gifford in *Modern Manners*, she characterises him as a transitory, flitting insect, at best a 'calm assassin' for the establishment, who will disappear, as fashion does, by ignoring him. Ironically, Gifford's overarching motivations behind both *The Baviad* and *Epistle to Peter Pindar* are the preservation and continuation of convention. Where Robinson attacks the flitting insects of ephemerality, or Wolcot ridicules Pitt as he leaves office, Gifford attacks those who would corrupt the permanent establishments in art and politics. He represents his targets, overwhelmingly, as diseased, corruptive reptiles. Even when he summarises the rise of the Della Cruscans in *The Baviad*, representing their popularity as a fever that has swept the nation, his imagery of a diseased body of literature suggests the later poisonous reptile metaphors that he uses to attack John Williams, and then Wolcot in his *Epistle to Peter Pindar*. Importantly, when his imagery moves from disease metaphors to disease-spreading reptile metaphors, his political motivations display themselves most strongly. For Gifford, the reptile corrupts the institutions of justice, religion and royal authority, and moreover, can do so with purpose, selecting targets calculated to do the most damage.

The difference between the responses to Gifford's satires written after his editing of the *Anti-Jacobin* compared to those written before is also significant, particularly because there is little difference in the kind of politics that Gifford himself advocates before and after this point. For example, when Gifford attacks Williams, his use of reptile metaphors vary very little compared with the imagery he uses to criticise Wolcot. Both instances are personal attacks, and both use

reptile imagery to suggest that his targets represent significant threats to the cherished British institutions of justice, religion and monarchy. Gifford's political views do not change from the early 1790s through to the early nineteenth century. However, after 1797 and his editorship at the *Anti-Jacobin*, Gifford's ties to the Tory government become clear and direct, and his detractors use this as their main line of attack. For example, in 1793 when Robinson publishes *Modern Manners*, she attacks Gifford for his insignificance, representing him as an irritating fly. She hints at the political disparity between herself and Gifford, but her central theme is his failure as a critic. She ridicules him by highlighting his pretensions to the mantle of Pope, depicting him not as Pope's heir, but as one of his dunces. For Robinson, Gifford is just 'a greedy fly' the like of which 'legions every day, [Pope's] pen subdu'd'.⁹⁵ She combines this ridicule with a condemnation of the flighty world of fashion, and a disavowal of the bloodshed in France. However, in using reptile and insect imagery throughout her poem, Robinson combines her criticisms on Gifford, fashion and the French Revolution, which simultaneously highlights the folly of what is happening in France, and the ephemerality of critics like Gifford, and the politics that they espouse.

After he edits the *Anti-Jacobin*, Gifford's critics are able to attack his politics much more directly by focussing on his relationship with the Tory government. *Out at Last* both directly and indirectly targets Gifford's Tory benefactors. Although the poem is really about the fall of William Pitt, referring, as Wolcot does, to Gifford in a footnote links the figures together. However, Wolcot secures that link by directly discussing Gifford's ties with Pitt, ridiculing him as the Tories' 'gamekeeper' hired to protect their 'plump little partridges'.

⁹⁵ Robinson, *Modern Manners*, p. 93, l. 69.

For example, in his preface to his *Ultra-Crepidarius: A Satire on William Gifford* (1823), Leigh Hunt states that

All the power of this man has consisted in the sympathy he has found with common-place understandings, and in the co-operation of the Tories, to whom he is a flattering servant. But the common-place are a large and well-faggotted set of brethren; and tools become formidable in the hands of power, though but wooden idols themselves.⁹⁶

Hunt wrote *Ultra-Crepidarius* partly in support of William Hazlitt's 1820 *Letter to William Gifford, Esq.*, which was an acerbic answer to defamatory reviews of several of Hazlitt's works that appeared in the *Quarterly Review* from April 1817 to July 1818. Hazlitt attributes these reviews to the *Quarterly's* editor, Gifford, although it is more likely that they were written by authors employed at the *Quarterly* and edited by Gifford before publication.⁹⁷ Hazlitt accuses Gifford of being motivated purely by political considerations. He claims that Gifford's business is

to keep a strict eye over all writers who differ in opinion with his Majesty's Ministers, and to measure their talents and attainments by the standard of their servility and meanness.⁹⁸

Moreover, Hazlitt damns Gifford as

the *Government Critic*, a character nicely differing from that of a government spy – the invisible link, that connects literature with the police. It is [his] business to keep a strict eye over all writers who differ in opinion with his Majesty's Ministers, and to measure their talents and attainments by the

⁹⁶ Leigh Hunt, 'Preface' to *Ultra-Crepidarius: A Satire on William Gifford*, in *BS* vol. 4, p. 128.

⁹⁷ William Hazlitt, *A Letter to William Gifford, Esq. From William Hazlitt, Esq.* in *ibid*, p. 313. The reviews that Hazlitt repudiates appear in the following issues of the *Quarterly Review*: 17 (April 1817), pp. 154-59; 18 (January 1818), pp. 458-66; and 19 (July 1818) pp. 424-34. The *Quarterly Review Archive*, ed. Jonathan Cutmore, attributes the April review to Coleridge, or possibly Gifford, the January review possibly to Gifford, and the July review to Eaton Stannard Barrett.

⁹⁸ Hazlitt, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

standard of their servility and meanness. [... He is] also paymaster of the band of Gentleman Pensioners⁹⁹ [...] the distinction between truth and falsehood [he] makes no account of: [he minds] only the distinction between Whig and Tory.¹⁰⁰

Here, Hazlitt states what Gifford himself implies in both his editorship of the *Anti-Jacobin* and the *Quarterly Review*, and the ferocity of his *Baviad* – that a ‘Government Critic’ is ‘the invisible link’ between ‘literature and the police’. Gifford’s ties to the Tory Government, held up with such vitriol by Hazlitt, were consistently used against Gifford throughout his career.

Importantly, Hazlitt returns to the reptile / amphibian imagery favoured by Gifford, stating that his job is to

crawl and leave the slimy track of sophistry and lies over every work that does not ‘dedicate its sweet leaves’ to some luminary of the Treasury Bench, or is not fostered on the hot-bed of corruption [...] You are, by appointment, literary toad-eater to greatness, and taster to the court.¹⁰¹

Not only does Hazlitt use Gifford’s reptile imagery against him, but directly points to Gifford as a source of ‘corruption’. Gifford attacks writers not for their merit, but for politics at odds with those of the establishment, measuring their ‘talents and attainments by the standard of their servility and meanness’.¹⁰² In addition, Hazlitt posits in *The Spirit of the Age* that Gifford assumes ‘with much complacency [...] that Tory writers are classical and courtly as a matter of course, as it is a standing jest and evident truism [to Gifford] that Whigs and Reformers must be persons of low birth and breeding’.¹⁰³ What Gifford’s use of reptile imagery in both *The Baviad* and *Epistle to Peter Pindar* demonstrates, and

⁹⁹ ‘Among his various sinecures, Gifford was Paymaster of the gentlemen-pensioners, at a salary of £1,000 a year’ (Strachan, *BS vol. 4*, p. 369, 3n.).

¹⁰⁰ Hazlitt, op. cit.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 313.

¹⁰² Wolcot, *Out at Last*, p. 296.

¹⁰³ William Hazlitt, *The Spirit of The Age, or Contemporary Portraits* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1991), p.193.

that his critics are evidently aware of, is that he does not discriminate between artistic and political transgression: Gifford was an authoritarian and his defence of both literary conventions and the political establishment confirms this. Moreover, Gifford's official relationship with the Tories only begins in 1797, but his politics do not change from the publication of *The Baviad* in 1791. Throughout his satires and editing, Gifford defends the establishment against those who threaten it, and, for Gifford, to threaten literary conventions also threatens political hierarchies. In this, Gifford creates a politics of literature, and when he uses reptile imagery it is to connect the corruption of literature to the subversion of politics.

Chapter Five

‘Chimerical Non-Descriptors’: Monsters and Monstrosity in the Print Satires of James Gillray

In his *Rights of Man*, Paine states that

When we think or speak of a *Judge* or a *General*, we associate with it the ideas of office and character; we think of gravity in the one, and bravery in the other: but when we use a word *merely as a title*, no ideas associate with it. Through all the vocabulary of Adam, there is not such an animal as a Duke or a Count; neither can we connect any certain idea with the words [...] What respect then can be paid to that which describes nothing, and which means nothing? Imagination has given figure and character to centaurs, satyrs, and down to all the fairy tribe; but titles baffle even the power of fancy, and are a chimerical non-descript.¹

For Paine, because a judge or a general is functional, the titles of Judge and General have meaning, whereas the titles Duke or Count signify nothing but themselves. They describe nothing, and they do nothing. Moreover, the title of Judge, for example, has weight and substance: it has a function in society and is therefore granted a reality that is denied to aristocratic titles. The concepts of ‘Duke’ or ‘Count’ are figments of the imagination, but more than that, they are even more ludicrous than the concept of centaurs or satyrs: they ‘baffle even the power of fancy’, by having as little form as a chimera. Paine’s phrase is indicative not only of a period when the conflict between concrete and abstract thinking was a paramount concern, but also where the imagery of monsters was used to discuss the dangers of abstraction. This chapter will analyse the use of chimera and monster imagery in the period’s satire, focussing on the anti-Jacobin prints of James Gillray. I argue that in the hands of conservative satirists, monster metaphors are used to represent a dangerous politics of abstract theories and principles, embraced by the French revolutionaries and their radical

¹ Paine, op. cit., p. 81.

supporters in Britain. Like an inversion of the radical satirical appropriation of Burke's image of a 'swinish multitude', discussed above in chapter one, the way Paine characterises aristocratic titles as 'chimerical non-descripts' is one example of the way monster imagery has been used to represent political and philosophical abstraction, but it is overtaken by conservative efforts to represent the principles that Paine himself advocates as monstrously abstract.

In Greek mythology, the Chimera was a female, fire-breathing monster with the heads of a lion, a goat and a snake.² The Chimera is interesting because it represents an unnatural combination of different animals, and its monstrosity lies not in its separate components, but in the forcing together of incompatible elements. The result is something irrational and unbelievable. Paine exploits this when he describes aristocratic titles: not only are they imaginary, but unlike a fairy or imaginary being, they do not even make sense within their own context: a chimera is wholly unnatural, fitting into no category but its own. It represents something unseen, obscured, or abstracted, and for Paine, so does the concept of aristocracy. Just as the Age of Enlightenment sought to reject the monsters of superstition, moving humanity into rational maturity, so Paine rejects aristocracy, which he sees as belonging to a more childish and unsophisticated period of history.

Where the origins of the swinish multitude and John Bull are quite easily identifiable,³ monsters are prevalent throughout cultures across history. They are less historically specific than, for example, John Bull, because they represent more fundamental aspects of the human psyche – the fear of the unknown or

² See Sabine G. Oswalt, *Concise Encyclopedia of Greek and Roman Mythology* (Glasgow: Wm. Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., 1969).

³ Swine imagery dates back much further than Burke, and from a variety of sources. However, the satiric uses of the swinish multitude after 1790 and well into the nineteenth century all refer to Burke's coining of the term.

unknowable, of the unseen threat of the ‘other’, and a bridge between the ethereal and corporeal worlds.⁴ Despite the lack of period-specificity in monster imagery, the ideas that monster metaphors suggest are of particular significance in the Romantic period and its politics. For example, the threat of Jacobinism and of a revolution in England was portrayed as literally a danger of monstrous proportions: insidious, invisible but ever-present, inhabiting the dark corners of conspiratorial houses and able to adopt many forms and shapes. The danger of Jacobinism, as with monstrosity, was that of its abstract formlessness, a concept with no basis in physical reality.

The nature of abstraction was a major concern for artists and writers in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In her essay ‘From “Brilliant Ideas” to “Fitful Thoughts”: Conjecturing the Unseen in Late Eighteenth Century Art’, Barbara Maria Stafford examines how artists in the late eighteenth century present abstract notions or ideas. She posits that

⁴ The last two of these can be placed under the umbrella of transgression. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen discusses monstrous transgressions in the introductory chapter in his anthology of essays on monsters in culture:

the monster of prohibition polices the borders of the possible, interdicting through its grotesque body some behaviours and actions, envaluing others [...] The monster of prohibition exists to demarcate the bonds that hold together that system of relations we call culture, to call horrid attention to the borders that cannot – *must* not – be crossed.

See ‘Monster Culture (Seven Theses)’, in Cohen (ed.), *Monster Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 3-25, here p. 13. On difference, see *ibid.*, pp. 14-15:

the monster arises at the gap where difference is perceived as dividing a recording voice from its captured subject; the criterion of this division is arbitrary, and can range from anatomy or skin color [sic] to religious belief, custom and political ideology [...] Given that the recorders of the history of the West have been mainly European and male, women [...] and nonwhites [...] have found themselves repeatedly transformed into monsters, whether to validate specific alignments of masculinity and whiteness, or simply to be pushed from its realm of thought.

On miscegenation, see p. 14: ‘As a vehicle of prohibition, the monster most often arises to enforce the laws of exogamy, both the incest taboo [...] and the decrees against interracial sexual mingling’. Stephen Pender, in his essay “No Monsters at the Resurrection”: Inside Some Conjoined Twins’, in Cohen, *op. cit.*, pp. 143-167, here p. 147, presents an interpretation of monsters similar to the location of them as abstract: ‘it is not simply that monsters throw doubt on an ordered perception of a world full of similitudes and correspondences; rather, monsters sustain the world by means of their legible deformity’.

for eighteenth-century art theory concerning the picturing of ‘idols’ or of the fictitious and the ‘unreal,’ there is a sequence of cognate terms that play upon the association of darkness, shadow, obscurity, allegory [...] fantasm [sic], conjecture, illusion, lie with non-existence.⁵

The figure of the Chimera represents all of these elements: an abstract, obscured by being neither one animal nor the other. Furthermore, it represents the elusiveness of the imagination: for the eighteenth-century painter Joshua Reynolds, as Stafford states,

an idea is a proxy object – bodiless and chimerical – represented statically [sic] in our reproductive imagination, not the vivid presentation of a real and mutable being that possesses the force and energy of a direct perception.⁶

Although Stafford’s focus is on the concept of an artistic or purely imaginative idea, her comment is useful for the purposes of this chapter when we apply it to the Romantic period’s core political discussions, such as wider parliamentary representation, freedom of thought and speech, and the call for reform and revolution. For example, where Blake fights against the spectre of abstraction, the political satirists of the Romantic period characterise the dangers of shadowy, obscure, abstract politics through the imagery of monsters and chimeras. Northrop Frye points out that Blake uses monstrous imagery to represent modes of abstraction:

Against the animal body of the lamb, we have the figure that Blake calls, after Ezekiel, the Covering Cherub, who represents a great many things, the unreal world of gods, human tyranny and exploitation, and the remoteness of the sky, but whose animal form is that of the serpent or dragon wrapped around the forbidden tree. The dragon, being both monstrous and fictitious, is the best

⁵ Barbara Maria Stafford, ‘From “Brilliant Ideas” to “Fitful Thoughts”: Conjecturing the Unseen in Late Eighteenth Century Art’, in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 48:3 (1985), pp. 329-363, here p. 332.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 335.

animal representative of the bogies inspired by human inertia: the Book of Revelation calls it: 'the beast that was, and is not, and yet is'.⁷

In political satire, monsters represent the obscured enemy working to corrupt or destroy political establishments. This is particularly evident in the anti-Jacobin satires that appeared in publications such as *The Anti Jacobin Review and Magazine*. Additionally, the imagery of monsters and chimeras provides an important link between other forms of satiric animal metaphors. Burke's swinish multitude, discussed above in chapter one, is used in very similar ways to depict the masses. Don Herzog points out that in a December 1832 edition of the *Bristol Job Nott*, the mob was described as 'an animal with many heads, but no brains'.⁸ Moreover, Herzog suggests that the image of the swinish multitude naturally tends towards monster metaphors:

The many-headed monster swirls together with the equally distinguished pursuit of animal imagery to dehumanize one's opponents, a pursuit which sometimes turned in a porcine direction.⁹

Representing the agitated working classes as either a multitude of swine or a many-headed monster both have the same ostensible purpose: to dehumanise the writer's subjects and therefore make it easier to oppress or abuse them.

However, there is a crucial difference between the metaphors, and one that sets monster imagery apart from any other bestial metaphor used in Romantic-era satire. Representing the working classes as swine, high society

⁷ Northrop Frye, 'Blake's Treatment of the Archetype', in Judith O'Neill (ed.), *Critics on Blake* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970), pp. 47-61, here pp. 54-55. For more on Blake's resistance to abstraction, see Frye, *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), esp. pp. 15-25, 73, 163, 190, 267, and 317; E. P. Thompson, *Witness Against the Beast: William Blake and the Moral Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 95, 199-200, and 213; and G. R. Sabri-Tabrizi, *The 'Heaven' and 'Hell' of William Blake* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1973), pp. viii, 146, 150-152, 201-202, 212-214, 238, 279, and 291-294.

⁸ Herzog, op. cit., p. 507.

⁹ Ibid.

ladies as birds, or rival writers as insects serves to diminish those targets in very specific ways, for a variety of satirical and political purposes. However, with all of these, the image is concrete; each metaphor fixes its target in specific terms. Satirising an opponent as a monster, however, has the opposite effect. Monsters have no fixed form, and the term 'monster' can mean any one of a variety of mythical creatures, and as with the chimera, an image that recurs frequently throughout the period's satire, it literally represents formlessness. The image of the monster is infinitely creative and self-perpetuating, because its form is limited only by a writer or artist's imagination. The image of the swinish multitude may be a highly effective and provocative metaphor for the lower classes, and reptile metaphors may be used for a wide variety of reasons, but they are all fixed to a relatively rigid set of meanings. In his essay, "No Monsters at the Resurrection": Inside Some Conjoined Twins', Stephen Pender argues that

it is not simply that monsters throw doubt on an ordered perception of a world full of similitudes and correspondences; rather, monsters sustain the world by means of their legible deformity.¹⁰

The deformity of a monster, Pender suggests, can be read, and moreover, this readability is needed to 'sustain the world': deformity makes readable the abstract, the incomprehensible, making sense out of nonsense. Even when the deformity of a monster descends into total abstraction, as with Paine's 'chimerical non-descript', monsters are needed to create contrast and relief to the rest of the world. Monsters are often created for scapegoats, but also are useful to define and demarcate the world. In one sense, the unreason of monsters creates the boundaries within which reason sits.

¹⁰ Pender, op. cit., p. 147.

1.1 Wolcot, Gillray, and the spectre of British Jacobinism

Monsters do not fit into categories in the way that animals do – each is its own unique creature separate from a wider family, in contrast to, for instance, a jay that belongs to the bird family, or a pig to the mammal family. A monster, by definition, is (usually) the single example of its kind – indeed one essential aspect of a monster is that it is unique, separate from ‘normal’ animals and even other monsters. As such, it is easier to portray monstrosity in pictorial, rather than textual satire. This is why monster imagery appears more frequently in the period’s print than in prose or verse satires. In addition, monster imagery appears more often in conservative than in reformist or radical satire, although it is used occasionally by radical satirists. John Wolcot, for example describes ‘printer’s devils’ in the final section of his poem ‘Out at Last!’, whose insect imagery is discussed above in chapter four. After relishing Pitt’s fall from office, Wolcot warns him that the Pittite periodicals ‘that took delight / To make thee, like the snow-ball, white, / Will paint thee now as black as Hell’.¹¹ Wolcot names the *Anti Jacobin Review* and ‘George Rose’s papers’,¹² such as *The Sun* and *The True Briton*, as apparently loyal papers that will leap on Pitt as soon as he becomes an easy target.¹³ They

No more thy [Pitt’s] voice angelic hail,
But give the horn, and hoof, and tail,
With Cerberus’s frightful yell! –
Paint thee a damned spirit from below,
Rais’d by some wizard for the nation’s woe.¹⁴

¹¹ Wolcot, *Out at Last*, p. 117, ll. 205-207.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 116, ll. 199-202.

¹³ Strachan, *BS vol. 4*, p. 361, n. 55.

¹⁴ Wolcot, *Out at Last*, p. 117, ll. 208-212

Wolcot mocks Pitt for relying so heavily on the image that the pro-Government press have created of him, and how he is therefore utterly at their mercy if they choose to manipulate that image. The religious-monster imagery Wolcot uses – ‘horn, and hoof, and tail, / With Cerberus’s frightful yell / [...] a damned spirit from below’, provide a nice contrast to Pitt’s previous snow-white image. The elusive and abstract nature of a public persona is more accessible to the media than to the person it is supposed to represent.

Wolcot continues by picturing Pitt ‘sprawling in the dirt’. ‘The mob’ shout abuse at him before

The printer’s devils [that] appear!
With ink thy visage they besmear,
While each in turn indignantly abuses;
And more their pris’ner to disgrace,
They empt the pelt-pot in thy face!
Roaring, around thee as they caper,
‘Take that, my boy, for tax on paper!’¹⁵

The ‘pelt-pot’ was a vessel full of stale urine used in printing, and so in throwing it in Pitt’s face they not only demean and insult him, but figuratively bind him to the process of print culture and the media.¹⁶ He is no longer a flesh and blood man, but a slave in text, bound to his print-masters’ will. Again, Wolcot highlights the monstrosity in the scene by having devils torture Pitt, but the true monstrosity is having the real, physical Pitt transformed into abstract text on a page. It is this with which Wolcot really taunts Pitt: that of having lost control of his own image, and by extension, his own sense of self.

Wolcot’s ‘printer’s devils’ are an example of the use of monster imagery in radical satire but the vast majority of monster imagery appears in conservative

¹⁵ Wolcot, *Out at Last*, ll. 224-230.

¹⁶ Strachan, *BS vol. 4*, p. 362, 57 n.

satire, where the concerns it raises over abstraction are ideal for satirising British radicals and Jacobins, who with their bizarre notions of equality and democracy threaten the security of the state. James Epstein and David Karr have pointed out that for radicals and revolutionaries

An overreliance [sic] on abstract principles had led, as Burke charged, to violent anarchy and dictatorship pursued under the misconceived sign of equality. During the 1790s, according to David Simpson, “anti-theoretical rhetoric” became a central theme in defining British national identity: British experience stood opposed to French theory.¹⁷

In the 1790s, the spectre of Jacobinism was perceived by the establishment as being a serious threat to the English political system, and representing revolutionary ideals as not only physically violent, but also abstract, unrealistic and ideologically unsound was a way to combat their rise. In reality, Jacobin doctrine was at best a loosely held set of ideals based vaguely around a general desire for parliamentary reform. H.T. Dickinson posits that ‘The British Jacobins were committed to a radical reform of Parliament, but most of them were not republicans like Paine and few of them had worked out a programme of social and economic reforms’. More importantly,

They were clearly uncertain about how best to improve the condition of the people. They were also uncertain and divided about what methods and tactics to adopt in order to achieve their aims [...] They found it difficult to agree on what policy should be pursued if rational persuasion failed to achieve their objectives.¹⁸

British Jacobinism was undoubtedly not the highly organised, unified insurgency that conservative propaganda and satire would suggest. Moreover, although

¹⁷ James Epstein and David Karr, ‘Playing at Revolution: British “Jacobin” Performance’, in *Journal of Modern History*, 79 (September 2007), pp. 499-530, here pp. 499-500.

¹⁸ H. T. Dickinson, *British Radicalism and the French Revolution, 1789-1815* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1985), p. 18.

Jacobinism is defined by the call for reform in Parliament, it is not even ‘clear that the British Jacobins genuinely desired to live under a government of the people’,¹⁹ and where ‘a minority considered any kind of physical force tactic which would apply irresistible pressure to the governing elite’, the majority of British radicals and Jacobins wanted reform, or at the most, non-violent revolution.²⁰

Satirists use monster imagery to portray the dangers of their political opponents, and so unsurprisingly Jacobins are frequently represented as chimerical abominations, hiding away in caves, such as in James Gillray’s *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* [fig. 5.1].²¹ Gillray was one of the most prolific print satirists of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, and his cartoons for the conservative *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine* frequently utilise monster imagery. The *Anti-Jacobin Review* ran from 1798-1821, following the end of William Gifford’s similarly titled *Anti Jacobin*. The *Anti-Jacobin Review* was edited by John Gifford, who although no relation to William, did suffer from a case of mistaken identity at the hands of Wolcot, as has already been discussed in chapter four. Gillray’s *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* appeared in the September 1798 edition of the *Anti-Jacobin Review*, and depicts a Jacobin monster cowering in a cave as Truth shines down her exposing light on the creature. Scattered around the monster are volumes with titles such as ‘Sedition’ and ‘Anarchy’, which are set alight once Truth’s light touches them. The monster itself is a hybrid, with the body of a man but one leg

¹⁹ Dickinson, op. cit., p. 15.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 18. See chapter one in Dickinson for an exploration of the diverse, and overwhelmingly non-violent nature of British Jacobinism in the 1790s. See also Dickinson, *Liberty and Property: Political Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), pp. 263-264, 265, and 272.

²¹ Gillray, *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* (London: J. Wright, 1 September 1798).

turning into the tail of a serpent. He wears a tri-colour Phrygian cap, there is a bloody dagger in his belt, and a mask is falling from his face as he tries to hide. The contrast between light and dark in the print juxtaposes the malformed obscurity of Jacobin doctrine with the pure, cleansing light of Truth. The Jacobin monster personifies obscurity, and is contrasted not simply with a creature of the light, but by an angelic, beautiful woman. Every element in the Jacobin's cave is mirrored outside it – where beautiful Truth and the monstrous Jacobin make the most obvious counterpoints, the toads and bats retreating back into the cave are juxtaposed by winged cherubim bearing a cross, a crown, and the scales of justice. The seditious books set alight by Truth are contrasted with a cloud-borne book, which looks like the Bible but is actually the *Anti-Jacobin Review*.

The contrast between Truth and the Jacobin-monster is interesting for several reasons. For example, that the monster is gendered as male, and Truth female, is significant. By portraying Truth as female, Gillray explicitly associates her with Britannia, and patriotism. To resist Truth here, the print suggests, is to resist national duty and to side with French sedition and murder. Furthermore, the cherubim carrying the scales of justice are a reminder of the conceptual ties between truth and the law. The monster, represented as masculine, has different significance. Primarily, the monster's masculinity highlights how potentially dangerous it is, in relief to the implicit soft femininity of Truth. The phallic blood-stained dagger around its belt sexualises the corrupting influence of Jacobin doctrines in England, figuring acts of sedition, symbolised by the literature surrounding the monster, as both violent, and as a stain on the honour of British truth and liberty, gendered as female. Although female Truth is presented as pure and unadulterated, the monster's bloody knife is suggestive of violent acts that he has already committed. Moreover, the acts he commits, or

threatens to commit, are not merely violent – they are corruptive, and self-perpetuating. The Jacobin's seditious materials and his knife are different tools in the same trade; the former to disseminate political corruption and assimilate those he corrupts into monsters themselves, and the latter to destroy those who cannot be corrupted. The soiled dagger suggests that he has already begun his bloody campaign, and the fairly blatant phallic imagery sexualises the monster's corruptive acts. The implication here is that the worst is yet to come – the Jacobin monster in the cave may well be hideous and frightening, but the true horror is the prospect of him corrupting the virginal Britain, symbolised by archetypes such as Truth and Justice. The danger that British purity may fall into corruption is a far greater monstrosity than the creature visible in Gillray's print.

A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism [fig. 5.1] reflects the anxieties in the 1790s over the influence of French ideals, and the subsequent threat of revolution, in Britain. The monster in Gillray's print is an appropriate metaphor on a literal level: the prospect of a domestic revolution for periodicals like *The Anti-Jacobin Review* was indeed monstrous. However, Gillray's use of monster imagery in the print speaks to wider concerns that occupied much of eighteenth and early-nineteenth century thought. In a study that examines the eighteenth-century fascination with natural oddities and carnival freak shows, Maja-Lisa von Sneidern considers the importance of a now obscure mode of art known as anamorphosis:

Anamorphosis is a genre of visual art that was more well-known in the early eighteenth century than today. Emerging from experiments in perspective [...] the most common form of anamorphosis was a painting that viewed from the front appears to be mere or deformed content – splotches of color chaotically applied – but when the viewer moves to the edge and looks longways, a

representational image emerges [...] Chaotic confusion is revalued as a challenge to perspective.²²

The concept of anamorphous art is useful when considering the representation of monsters: a crucial aspect to monstrosity is that it is often recognisably, but distortedly human. As von Sneidern states, 'Monsters clearly transgress morphological categories and police imaginary boundaries'.²³ These boundaries are between the human and non-human, the pure and corrupt, the ordered and the chaotic. Anamorphous art appears to be chaotic, but viewed from the correct angle becomes ordered. Similarly, monsters and monstrosity are effectively anamorphous reflections of our ideal selves. Von Sneidern goes on to explain the importance of this concept for eighteenth-century art:

If the early eighteenth-century West was in ideological flux as Marx argues, and suffered epistemic instability as Foucault suggests, and if, as I suspect, the explosion of oddities and commodities from around the world contributed significantly to flux and instability, then anamorphosis can be useful to focus on operation attempting to establish ideological and epistemic order.²⁴

In Romantic-era satire, this has far-reaching political implications: monster imagery is used as a disturbing, anamorphous other against which to present an ordered political ideal. This is undoubtedly evident in *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* [fig. 5.1]: in form, apparel and company, Gillray presents the Jacobin-monster not merely in direct opposition to Truth, but as a distorted, anamorphous reflection of Truth.²⁵

Anamorphous art provides a useful framework to analyse monster imagery in the satire of the Romantic period, and underscores the sense of

²² Maja-Lisa von Sneidern, 'Joined at the Hip: A Monster, Colonialism and the Scriblerian Project', in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 30:3 (Spring, 1997), pp. 213-231, here p. 215.

²³ von Sneidern, op. cit., p. 214.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 216.

²⁵ Gillray, *A Peep*.

distortion that many of these satires elicit. Caricature is nothing if not visual distortion, and the logical extreme of this is total inversion: light into dark, beauty into ugliness. Prints such as *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* [fig. 5.1], with its juxtaposition of light and darkness, illustrate Gillray's interest in inversions and opposites. A key factor in monstrosity and monster imagery is its inversion of good and beauty – a carnivalesque reversal of what society reveres. This is no more evident than in his January 1798 print, *The Apotheosis of Hoche* [fig. 5.2].²⁶ Gillray's print depicts Lazare Hoche, who was a French general and 'the embodiment of revolutionary animosity towards England', floating up to Heaven following his unexpected death.²⁷ As Hoche ascends, instead of a harp he plays a miniature guillotine, rising towards a dangling noose. Heaven's gates are not guarded by Saint Peter, but two chimerical monsters, each with four heads of different animals, and the gates themselves are decorated with inverse Commandments, such as 'Thou shalt Steal' and 'Denounce thy Father & thy Mother'.²⁸ In addition, it is not God sitting behind the gates, but the abstract concept of Equality, represented by a triangle. It appears as if light emanates from the figure, but it is in fact bayonet blades. The spectre of abstraction is at its most extreme here, as God himself is re-figured as the most Jacobinical of abstract concepts, and worse, violence, not light, emanates from it. Moreover, the authority of God, and the hierarchical nature of the Church is subverted by representing God not as 'the Lord', but as egalitarianism.

It is interesting that amongst all this carnivalesque grotesquery, Hoche himself is not even caricatured, much less represented by a monster. The sun

²⁶ Gillray, *The Apotheosis of Hoche* (London: H. Humphrey, 11 January 1798), in Hill, *Fashionable Contrasts*, plate 25.

²⁷ Hill, *Fashionable Contrasts*.

²⁸ Gillray, *The Apotheosis of Hoche*.

risers behind him, forming a halo that out of context would suggest something quite different than the rest of the print. This image is at the centre, and so provides the focal point in relief to the monstrous imagery that surrounds it. Importantly, when Gillray inverts imagery in prints such as *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* [fig. 5.1], or indeed *The Apotheosis of Hoche* [fig. 5.2], he does not just present the hideous opposite of concepts such as justice or religion (although he does do that as well), but reflects aspects of those concepts not apparent in their original forms. In *The Apotheosis of Hoche*, Gillray implies that the visible, extreme monstrosity surrounding Hoche pales in comparison to the monstrosity of the idealised figure at the centre of the print. Not only is it monstrous, Gillray suggests, to suppose that Hoche should go to Heaven, but that Hoche's own spiritual and political monstrousness should be hidden behind his non-caricatured image. The medusa, Heaven's chimeras and the ghoulish sansculottes surrounding Hoche are the external manifestation of his internalised monstrousness.

In most satires that use monster imagery, it is the implied, unseen monstrosity that is most horrifying: the image of an uncaricatured, and implicitly uncriticised and morally pure Hoche ascending to Heaven is far more monstrous than the ghouls that surround him. Similarly, the monstrosity in *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* comes not from the hideous creature in the cave, but from the way it mirrors Truth. Presented in this way, a monstrous distortion, or reflection of noble concepts such as truth, justice and British liberty is far more insidious, and more fundamentally frightening than a specific enemy that can be fought and defeated. Moreover, in distortedly reflecting these concepts, the abstraction of monstrous Jacobin doctrine highlights the abstract nature of the values conservative satires like *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* ostensibly

defend. Gillray's print implies that Jacobinism is a cowardly doctrine easily bested by the merest glimmer of Truth's light, but even this betrays an underlying, unresolved anxiety over the gap between the abstract and the concrete, which reflects Gillray's own political ambivalence. In the monster, Gillray personifies Jacobin or revolutionary ideals, and presents them, despite appearances, in quite human terms. The monster is a coward, frightened and appears to be quite weak, but these human characteristics do not cohere with the apparent ideological critique on display. This is important because monster imagery is unique amongst satirical bestial metaphors in that it has no fixed shape, and can therefore potentially represent a far wider range of discourses than other animal imagery. Crucially, monstrosity is essentially an abstract concept because it has no fixed form, yet monsters, such as the Chimera, or Gillray's Jacobin-monster can embody abstract concepts such as Jacobinism or other political ideals. Gillray's monster is an attempt to give form to contemporary anxieties over Jacobinism – doing so allows the satirist to portray an easily defeated monster. However, in presenting the victory as an easy one, Gillray forgoes the complexities of revolutionary politics in favour of caricature, and so this serves as an example of the limitations of this kind of imagery in political satire, particularly when trying to summarise complex, abstract concepts in quick, easy images.

1.2 A 'dangerously unfixed' image: monstrosity and paranoia

Unsurprisingly, the Jacobin-monster appears throughout the print satires that accompany the editions of the *Anti-Jacobin Review*, in both Gillray's and others' works. These include the 1799 print *The Night Mare* [fig. 5.3] by John Chapman, where Charles James Fox is depicted sleeping on a broken bed, wearing a

revolutionary Phrygian cap, while strange creatures run amok in his bedchamber.²⁹ Fox was the leader of the Whigs in opposition, and opposed Prime Minister Pitt on key issues such as the French Revolution and 1795-1796 treason and sedition bills.³⁰ Chapman is parodying the similarly-titled Thomas Rowlandson print *The Covent Garden Night Mare* [fig. 5.4], which depicts a naked, sleeping Charles James Fox, troubled by his gambling debts, as an incubus sits atop his chest and a horse peers from behind a curtain.³¹ This is in turn a parody of Henry Fuseli's 1781 painting, *The Nightmare* [fig. 5.5], which depicts an identical scene, but with a woman in place of Fox.³² Rowlandson's print parodies the eroticism of Fuseli's work by referring both to the prostitutes of Covent Garden, and Fox's own sexual appetites. Where Rowlandson politicises the scene by adding Fox, and a reference to his gambling, the *Anti-Jacobin Review* print makes the political comment a specific attack on Jacobinism. Moreover, that the inspiration for the third-tier parody is rooted in monster imagery makes it particularly suitable as a platform to label Fox as a Jacobin.

Monstrosity, which suggests both violence and the mythical, the unreal, is the perfect metaphor to represent Jacobinism as both physically dangerous and dangerously fantastical. Even the title of *The Night Mare* [fig. 5.3] suggests that the monsters tormenting Fox – a goat-like creature pulling at his hand, a strange, skeletal being riding a horse on his chest, and a winged devil – are figments of Fox's dreaming imagination as he wrestles with the monstrosity of Jacobinism. Of course, depicted here as a Jacobin, the implication is that these monsters are

²⁹ John Chapman, *The Night Mare* (London: J. Whittle, 1 May 1799).

³⁰ *DNB*.

³¹ Thomas Rowlandson, *The Covent Garden Night Mare* (London: William Humphrey, 1784).

³² Henry Fuseli, *The Nightmare* (1781).

simply extensions of himself. Moreover, the monster on top of Fox, parodying Fuseli's painting, rests a revolutionary flag on his chest, suggesting that he is internally troubled by his own, fearful political burden. The dagger imagery in Gillray's *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* [fig. 5.1] is also present here: the monster on Fox plants a flag on his chest, which depicts a knife stabbed into an upturned heart and crown. In addition, a winged dagger flies handle-first towards Fox's bed, and what appears to be the handle of a third dagger is partially concealed underneath Fox's pillow. One of the legs of the bed has broken, a satiric phallic image that is juxtaposed with the violent phallic imagery of the daggers, and is a joke on both Fox's weight and his competence as a politician.

To suggest that Fox was an outright Jacobin, as this and many other prints do, was at the least inaccurate and irresponsible. However, as Epstein and Karr comment, Jacobinism in the 1790s was

one of the most loaded terms in Britain's political vocabulary [yet] remained dangerously unfixed [...] William Pitt, his government and its loyal supporters used the word "Jacobin" promiscuously as part of their effort to influence the hearts and minds of British subjects. Lord Henry Cockburn, a Scottish jurist, later recalled that for conservatives "everything alarming and hateful and every political objector was a Jacobin. No innovation, whether practical, or speculative, could escape from this fatal word."³³

The concept of Jacobinism in the 1790s, Epstein and Karr suggest, is divorced from any real meaning, and becomes a sweeping term for any group or individual who displays the slightest dissent. Similarly, Albert Goodwin posits that the perception of English Jacobinism emerged from the English radicals'

alienation of their former liberal-minded supporters. The noisy demonstrations organized by the reform societies in support of the French, and above all their injudicious addresses to the National Convention not only [...] antagonized their

³³ Epstein and Karr, op. cit., p. 499.

conservative opponents and alienated many of their former liberal supporters, they had also now clearly emerged from their contacts with the French with the distorted but intelligible public image of ‘English Jacobins’.³⁴

This assessment is interesting because not only does Goodwin suggest that the public perception of English Jacobinism in the 1790s lay somewhere between the confused and the ‘intelligible’, but, crucially, that it was the public perception that mattered most. It was not that the English radicals were inherently or ideologically Jacobinical, but more that it was easy to define them as such in relief to their alienation from more moderate supporters. What is important here is that Jacobinism, particularly English Jacobinism, had no fixed or clear meaning – Epstein and Karr suggest as much in the conclusion to their article on British Jacobin performance.³⁵

Monster imagery in anti-Jacobin satire such as *The Night Mare* [fig. 5.3] or *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* [fig. 5.1] plays on the vagueness of the concept: Jacobinism is to be feared because it is an abstract, unspecific concept. Jacobinism can appear anywhere, materialising like a ghost from thin air, and anyone can be a suspect. The historian Richard F. Teichgraeber III comments that in the paranoid atmosphere of the 1790s, even

moderate voices were [...] carefully scrutinised for any hint of ‘Jacobin’ sympathy. For example, the great Scottish universities in Edinburgh and Glasgow, once progressive institutions where [Adam] Smith had begun his intellectual career, were now subject to what a recent historian has called a psychological reign of terror. In this setting, ‘Jacobinism’ served as a term to condemn any thought of political and economic reform.³⁶

³⁴ Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty: The English Democratic Movement in the age of the French Revolution* (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1979), pp. 266-267.

³⁵ Epstein and Karr, op. cit., p. 530.

³⁶ Richard F. Teichgraeber III, ‘Adam Smith and tradition: the *Wealth of Nations* before Malthus’, in Stefan Collini, Richard Whatmore, and Brian Young (eds.), *Economy, Polity, and Society: British Intellectual History 1750-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 85-104, here p. 95. See also Richard Whatmore, “‘A gigantic manliness’: Paine’s republicanism in the 1790s’, pp. 135-157, here p. 135, for a comment that the term ‘Republican’,

Just as with the spectre of ‘Red Terror’ in 1950s McCarthyite America, even the slightest dissent from the political status quo could have someone labelled as a Jacobin. Dickinson has also commented on this:

The radicals within Britain were [...] portrayed as dangerous demagogues and ambitious malcontents, jealous of the deserved honours and privileges of the ruling oligarchy [...] the aims of the British Jacobins were deliberately misrepresented and the consequences of adopting their ideals were grossly exaggerated.³⁷

Moreover, conservative propaganda was deployed to convince people of the dangers of Jacobinism, and, undoubtedly, satires such as *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* [fig. 5.1] and *The Night Mare* [fig. 5.3] were part of that campaign.³⁸ They exploit the rampant fear and suspicion of Jacobinism, but in doing so they reveal a vague, abstract conception not only of Jacobinism, but also of any political opposition or criticism. Furthermore, the use of monster imagery to satirise political opponents or apparently dangerous ideologies highlights a rigid political perspective on the part of the satire, and one that threatens to become abstracted itself.

2.1 Monstrous duality and mockery in Gillray’s *The Life of William Cobbett*

This is particularly interesting with regard to Gillray, whose political perspective was anything but rigid. As I discuss above in chapter one, Gillray’s personal politics are often obscured behind the need to sell satires to a relatively affluent, anti-reformist readership, in a politically oppressive environment. In this context,

‘so often one of abuse in the eighteenth century, is too pervasive’, and therefore much like the term ‘Jacobin’ in conservative propaganda.

³⁷ Dickinson, *British Radicalism*, p. 26.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30

his interest in duality, evidenced in satires such as *DOUBLÛRES of Characters* [fig. 5.7], printed in the November 1799 *Anti-Jacobin Review*, or the fifth and eighth prints in an eight-plate series titled *The Life of William Cobbett* [fig. 5.6], suggests a political conflict within himself as much as any that he depicts in his satiric targets.³⁹ *DOUBLÛRES of Characters* depicts seven prominent Whigs including Fox, Richard Brinsley Sheridan and the independent reformist Sir Francis Burdett, alongside alternative versions of themselves. For example, next to his conventional image, annotated as ‘A Friend to his Country’ is Sheridan as ‘Judas selling his Master’, while he clutches a bag of silver.⁴⁰ Gillray is interested in the difference between public appearances and private allegiances, which is the central theme of *DOUBLÛRES of Characters*, and reflected in his own political ambivalence, which is evident in the contrast between the overtly anti-Jacobin *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* [fig. 5.1] and the more moderate, though no less unpleasant, *Presages for the Millenium* [fig. 1.4]. Although *DOUBLÛRES of Characters* does not contain monster imagery, it does echo what Maja-Lisa von Sneidern has noted about the distortion of perspective in anamorphosis.⁴¹ The way that Gillray distorts the image of his subjects does not make them into monsters outright, but his distortions certainly twist their visages towards monstrosity. Looked at from a different angle Fox, for example, changes from ‘The Patron of Liberty’, into ‘The Arch Fiend’.⁴²

Similarly, in Gillray’s *The Life of William Cobbett* [fig. 5.6], a shadowy distortion appears behind the eponymous character. Cobbett was an essayist and

³⁹ Gillray, *The Life of William Cobbett, - written by himself* (London: H. Humphrey, 29 September 1809) eight plates, reproduced in John Derry (ed.), *Cobbett’s England, a Selection from the Writings of William Cobbett with Engravings by James Gillray* (London: The Folio Society, 1968), and *DOUBLÛRES of Characters; __or__striking Resemblances in Physiognomy* (London: J. Wright, 1 November 1798).

⁴⁰ Gillray, *DOUBLÛRES of Characters*.

⁴¹ von Sneidern, op. cit., p. 215.

⁴² Gillray, *DOUBLÛRES of Characters*.

politician who advocated a rise in British soldiers' pay after he enlisted in the army in 1783. As a journalist, Cobbett was originally a Tory, but later adopted a radical stance. Cobbett is perhaps best known for his *Weekly Political Register*, which he published from 1802 until his death in 1835.⁴³ Gillray's eight-plate series of prints depicts Cobbett who, after joining the army, steals private letters in order to bring his superiors to court-martial and 'Disorganize the Army preparatory to the Revolutionizing it altogether'.⁴⁴ Cobbett is subsequently unable to produce any evidence against his officers, and so promises his soul to Beelzebub in exchange for the ability to support his allegations with real evidence.⁴⁵ However, Cobbett is foiled in court by the presence of his entire regiment, who are prepared to testify against him, so he flees to America to create more mischief and support Napoleon. Finally, Beelzebub returns to claim Cobbett's soul, while his *Political Register* goes up in flames, and 'the Bats and Harpies of Revolution [hide] their heads in the gloom of the night', which are seen flying away back into the darkness.⁴⁶

In the fifth plate, Gillray depicts Cobbett delivering a speech taken from a real letter he wrote in March 1792 to the Judge-Advocate.⁴⁷ As he speaks, the Devil lurks in the window of 'Beelzebub's Pawnbrokers', wearing a Revolutionary Phrygian cap. He is reaching towards Cobbett's shadowy doppelganger, who stands in between Cobbett and the Devil. Plate eight also takes place outside 'Beelzebub's Pawnbrokers', and this time the Devil approaches ever closer to Cobbett's shadow, who is aware of the danger behind him as the real Cobbett seems oblivious. Bat-like creatures fly away as flames

⁴³ DNB.

⁴⁴ Gillray, *The Life of William Cobbett*, plate four, facing p. 128.

⁴⁵ Ibid., plate five, facing p. 161.

⁴⁶ Ibid., plates six to eight, facing pp. 176, 225, and 240, respectively.

⁴⁷ Derry, op. cit., p. 8.

and smoke engulf the scene. In both prints, Cobbett's shadow represents his soul, which is being claimed by the Devil, and although in these and other prints Jacobinism is represented by a monster, the portrayal here of Jacobinism as the Devil grasping for a soul is quite distinct from, for instance, *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* [fig. 5.1]. The monster in that print is a coward, working secretly in a cave to disperse seditious literature, only to cower pathetically when the light of truth shines on it.⁴⁸ In contrast, the Devil in *The Life of William Cobbett* [fig. 5.6] is active in the wider world, hiding in shop windows or behind curtains. This is the Jacobin-threat of the paranoid 1790s, a Devil ready to seduce and corrupt in exchange for its victims' darkened souls, where the monster in the cave merely produces sedition to send out into the world.

This description of Jacobin-monster imagery in satire presents two apparently quite different depictions of Jacobinism, linked by superficially similar imagery. However, there is a direct relationship between the monster imagery in satires such as *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* and *The Life of William Cobbett*: the Devil in the latter prints appears to collect Cobbett's soul, but Cobbett is surrounded by the same seditious literature that the Jacobin-monster produces in *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism*. This analysis suggests that Cobbett's evil behaviour, namely supporting the cause of the radicals, has encouraged the Devil of Jacobinism to clutch at his soul – Cobbett's Jacobinical sympathies, therefore, came first, followed by the presence of the Devil and the hellfire behind him. Indeed, in the first plate of Gillray's series, Cobbett boasts that as a boy the inhabitants of his village 'prophecied that my talents (unless the Devil was in it) would one day elevate me to a Post in some publick situation'.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Gillray, *A Peep in to the Cave of Jacobinism*.

⁴⁹ Gillray, *The Life of William Cobbett*, plate one, facing p. 49.

Of course, the Devil is in his later, dubious successes, but this prophecy suggests an unavoidable fate for Cobbett, as if the Devil were already directing Cobbett's destiny before he even makes his diabolical deal with him. What this line undoubtedly suggests is that Cobbett already had mischief in him – he did not need the Devil to encourage him, but Beelzebub was there to assist him when he needed it. However, the presence of Beelzebub in the fifth plate of the series is more ambiguous than simply assisting Cobbett's endeavours. For example, it appears that the Devil is reaching out towards Cobbett as if to grab him, but the positioning of his hands could just as easily suggest direction, as a puppeteer directs his marionette. Of course, Cobbett makes the deal to be able to present evidence against his superiors, but in reading this as an image of puppeteer and puppet, the plate goes much further than suggesting that Cobbett is simply being assisted by the Devil. Rather, he has relinquished his free will, becoming a slave to Beelzebub's direction. The positioning of Cobbett's shadowy double further suggests that he is under the influence of the Devil, representing both Cobbett's soul, and the strings being pulled by Beelzebub, and pulling Cobbett. In the eighth print, Cobbett's inevitable fate is realised and he is taken by the Devil surrounded by burning Hellfire. Interestingly, Lady Justice's arms appear out of the flames at the right of scene, holding her scales and a burning sword emblazoned with the word 'Justice'. This echoes the imagery in Gillray's earlier print *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* [fig. 5.1], where 'Truth' descends on the Jacobin-monster. Like the monster in the 1798 print, Cobbett is caught unawares by both Justice and the Devil, who seem to be working together to claim and punish Cobbett. This creates a more complex dynamic where it is not the monster of Jacobinism, here represented by Beelzebub, but the human agent Cobbett who is ultimately at fault.

It is possible to read *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* [fig. 5.1] and *The Life of William Cobbett* [fig. 5.6] as related narratives. The 1798 print represents British Jacobinism in an early state, being fostered by a hideous monster, but the 1809 series depicts Jacobin doctrine as having successfully gone out into the world, represented by the Devil wearing the Phrygian cap as he tempts Cobbett. This reading is important because it demonstrates how Gillray repositions his representation of Jacobinism as monstrous. The focal point of *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* is the monster, and the central message of the print is relatively simple – Jacobinism is a hideous deformity, a threat to British liberty, justice and religion, and must be destroyed by the light of truth. Unsurprisingly, the focus of *The Life of William Cobbett* is on the eponymous character, even in the plates that feature a Jacobin-Devil similar to the monster in *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism*. This shift of focus from imaginary monster to real person represents Gillray's move from depicting the abstract threat of Jacobinism in the 1790s, to a more specific portrayal of a single figure with perceived Jacobinical tendencies. In contrast to *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism*, the tone of *The Life of William Cobbett* is that of ridicule – Gillray's series does not warn of the imminent danger of revolution in England in the way that *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* does, but instead mocks Cobbett for his supposedly ludicrous politics, writing and behaviour, whilst suggesting that these things stem from an alliance with Jacobin principles. The spectre of abstract, monstrous Jacobinism still looms in *The Life of William Cobbett*, but in 1809, when anti-Jacobin fervour was not as strong, the fear of Jacobinism is literally relegated to the back of the scene, whilst mockery takes centre-stage.

2.2 Ridicule and bawdiness in Rowlandson's *A Charm for a Democracy* and Gillray's *Sin, Death, and the Devil*

Unsurprisingly, then, it is the satires produced in the 1790s that present both the most frightening and politicised monster imagery, and the satirical prints of *The Anti-Jacobin Review* in particular consistently represent Jacobins, radicals and reformers as monstrous, or at the behest of monsters. For example in Rowlandson's *A Charm for a Democracy* [fig. 5.8], printed in February 1799, a Satanic creature with horns and clawed feet sits above a cauldron as Whigs and Jacobins queue to watch it bubbling, fired by lighted books with titles such as 'Sedition', 'Whig Club' and 'Universal Equality'. The full title of Rowlandson's print, *A Charm for a Democracy, Reviewed, Analysed, & Destroyed Jan^y 1st 1799 to the Confusion of its Affiliated Friends*, mockingly refers to the recent demise of the *Anti-Jacobin Review*'s rival magazine, the *Analytical Review*, which advocated reform and featured radical writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft.⁵⁰ Derek Roper comments that the *Analytical Review* earned a reputation 'for its opinions, which were more radical both in politics and in religion than any other journal,'⁵¹ and that 'The most radical of the Reviews was certainly the *Analytical*.'⁵² Roper also notes that after the *Analytical Review* stopped publication following the owner Joseph Johnson making 'himself sufficiently obnoxious' to antagonise the Government,

⁵⁰ Rowlandson, *A Charm for a Democracy, Reviewed, Analysed, & Destroyed Jan^y 1st 1799 to the Confusion of its Affiliated Friends* (London: J. Whittle, 1 February 1799).

⁵¹ Derek Roper, *Reviewing before the Edinburgh, 1788-1802* (London: Methuen and Co., 1978), p. 22.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 178.

The *Antijacobin* [sic] *Review* claimed credit for giving its deathblow, and published [*A Charm for a Democracy*] in which a figure representing the *Analytical* is shown as “fallen never to rise again”.⁵³

A Charm for a Democracy [fig. 5.8] depicts Whigs and radical figures such as Charles Fox and Sir Francis Burdett lamenting the death of the *Analytical Review*, asking ‘Where can I hide my secluded Head’, and ‘What can I report to my Friends at the Bastille?’ Their final hope rests in the potion being boiled in the cauldron. In the smoke rising out of the concoction, four chimerical creatures are flying, three of which are identified by their collars as Voltaire, Price and Robespierre. It is unclear whether these creatures are the products of the Jacobinical mixture, flying out of the cauldron or if its revolutionary vapours have attracted them, but in either case the ghostly apparitions suggest a grotesque ideological inheritance to the characters surrounding the cauldron below. The cauldron itself is a metaphor for the dangerous regression with which Jacobinism threatens Britain, representing a political alchemy or witchcraft resurrected out of a dark, unreasoned past. This is also strongly suggestive of pagan ritual, and Rowlandson juxtaposes this suggestion with the angelic Government figures at the opposite end of the print. Interpreted as products of the cauldron, with the heads, limbs and wings of different animals, the flying creatures’ chimerical appearance serve as a further reminder of the dangerous abstraction of Jacobin politics. Where Gillray’s *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* [fig. 5.1] presents a glimpse of the productions of the Jacobin-monster, *A Charm for a Democracy*

⁵³ Roper, op. cit., pp. 178-179. Marilyn Butler also cites Roper’s comments on the *Analytical* in her essay ‘Culture’s medium: the role of the review’, in Stuart Curran (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 120-147, and notes that the *Analytical* was part of a contemporary reviewing culture that tended towards objectively summarising a book’s contents, ‘rather than on developing [a reviewer’s] opinions’, here pp. 126-127. For more on the *Analytical Review* see Stuart Andrews, *The British Periodical Press and the French Revolution, 1789-99* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), and Richard B. Schwartz, ‘The Analytical Review’, in Alvin Sullivan (ed.), *British Literary Magazines: The Augustan Age and the Age of Johnson, 1698-1788* (London: Greenwood Press, 1983), pp. 11-14.

presents a full view of its cave, and with the cauldron, the diabolical creation of Jacobinism.

In addition to the seated Devil overseeing the ritual, and the flying chimerical monsters, the cave is occupied by four dragons, one of which helps heat the cauldron with its fiery breath. The scene certainly seems to live up to its name as the ‘Cave of Despair’, but Rowlandson’s tone is actually closer to the mockery Gillray displays in *The Life of William Cobbett* [fig. 5.6], rather than the relatively solemn warning of a print like *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* [fig. 5.1]. The frightening setting of *A Charm for a Democracy* [fig. 5.8] is ironic – ostensibly dark and foreboding, it actually highlights the silliness of the *Analytical Review*, rather than the dangers of Jacobinism. The central figures of the print – the Whigs and radicals queuing behind the cauldron – are not plotting to bring down the state, but are pathetically lamenting the loss of their beloved periodical. The presence of the dragons and the heading ‘Cave of Despair’ above the entrance to the hollow underscore the overly melodramatic behaviour of its occupants. There is a serious comment on the dangerous nature of Jacobinism, and the threat of the French Revolution being replicated in Britain, and this is represented by the phantasms of Robespierre, Voltaire and Price. In addition, the Heavenly host at the top left of the print announces to the scene’s participants that ‘your Destruction cometh as a Whirlwind’ and ‘Vengeance is ripe’, implying that the demise of the *Analytical Review* is a victory on the side of Justice and the establishment, and a sign of the coming ‘Whirlwind’.⁵⁴

However, any comment on the danger of Jacobinism, and its impending failure in the face of the righteous strength of the British government is secondary to simply mocking the supporters of a recently fallen reformist

⁵⁴ Rowlandson, *A Charm For A Democracy*.

periodical. Rowlandson does not focus on the monster imagery in *A Charm for a Democracy* [fig. 5.8], instead choosing to ridicule the supporters of the *Analytical Review*. However, the images of monsters in the print are set in the context of a discourse on the abstracted nature of Jacobinism and British radicalism. Like Gillray's *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* [fig. 5.1], Rowlandson juxtaposes light and darkness on opposite sides of his satire, a metaphor which speaks to Enlightenment concerns over the nature of reasoned and abstract thinking. Like Gillray's *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism*, Rowlandson presents what might otherwise be a simplistic example of anti-radical 1790s government propaganda, but by incorporating monster imagery, places his satire within a discourse concerned not only with contemporary politics and print culture, but more importantly, the nature of political thought and the conflict between the solid and the abstract.

Gillray's June 1792 print, *Sin, Death, and the Devil* [fig. 5.9] can also be described as not dealing directly with the fear of abstract Jacobin doctrine, but in utilising monster imagery, becomes part of the discourse on distortion, abstraction and monstrosity.⁵⁵ *Sin, Death, and the Devil* is a parody of the scene in Book II of *Paradise Lost* where Satan meets his progeny Sin and Death at the gates of Hell.⁵⁶ In Gillray's print, Sin represents Queen Charlotte, depicted as a hideous, medusa-like hag who is serpentine from the waist down. An emaciated Pitt represents Death, armed with a poison-tipped spear, and is naked except for an ermine robe and a crown, signifying his ambitions to power.⁵⁷ In *Sin, Death,*

⁵⁵ Gillray, *Sin, Death, and the Devil*. Vide Milton (London: H. Humphrey, 9 June 1792).

⁵⁶ John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), Book II, ll. 629-897.

⁵⁷ Hill has noted that Gillray had already alluded to Pitt's ambition in his December 1791 print, *An Excrescence* [fig. 5.10], which depicts Pitt rising from the ground like a toadstool. One of his tentacle-like appendages has a *fleur-de-lis* similar to the one on Pitt's crown in *Sin, Death and the Devil*. See Gillray, *An Excrescence; - A Fungus; Alias - A Toadstool upon a Dung-Hill* (London:

and the Devil, Queen Charlotte as Sin is hideous from head to foot, in contrast to the Sin in *Paradise Lost*, who Milton describes as ‘woman to the waist, and fair’.⁵⁸ The Lord Chancellor, Edward Thurlow, is the Devil, and the Cerberean hound with three heads represents the War Secretary Henry Dundas, Foreign Secretary George Grenville and the Master-General of the Ordnance the Duke of Richmond.⁵⁹ *Sin, Death and the Devil* refers to the power-rivalry between the Prime Minister and the Lord Chancellor, which had come to a head just before the print was published, leading to Thurlow’s dismissal from the cabinet by the King. The print suggests that Queen Charlotte stood between Pitt and Thurlow’s animosity, but Draper Hill points out that ‘There is no discernible basis for the rumour that the Queen had been playing favourites’.⁶⁰ In the print, Gillray deviates from Milton’s text by having Sin defend Death, rather than Satan.

The sexual violence evident in *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* [fig. 5.1] is also present here, but here Gillray does not moralise over it – we are encouraged to laugh at the print’s bawdiness. Charlotte conveniently covers Pitt’s genitals with her hand as she shields him from Satan, but the position of her hand suggests she may be doing more than just preserving Pitt’s modesty. The phallic imagery of Thurlow and Pitt’s spears is clear, with Thurlow’s broken sceptre contrasted with Pitt’s glowing weapon, encouraged perhaps by Charlotte’s well-placed hand. Much of the humour here stems from the contrast between being shown a phallic symbol representative of Pitt’s masculine ability as a politician, while simultaneously being denied a look at his real, and implicitly much less impressive, manhood. It is also important to note that

H. Humphrey, 20 December 1791). Hill comments on the print that ‘It is suggested that Pitt, then entering his ninth year as Prime Minister, was usurping the prerogatives of the Crown.’

⁵⁸ Milton, op. cit., l. 650.

⁵⁹ These are identified in Hill, *Fashionable Contrasts*, p. 139.

⁶⁰ Hill, *Fashionable Contrasts*, p. 139.

Gillray alters Milton's source text by making Sin ugly from the waist up, with medusa-like snakes in her hair and a gut that hangs over her scaly legs. Hill comments that 'The most remarkable circumstance about this vicious assault is that it was probably conceived without malice', which may well be true – Hill points out that 'there is little reason to doubt that the print was motivated by respect for an apt image and not by hatred'.⁶¹ However, intentionally malicious or not, Gillray's depiction of Queen Charlotte is undeniably grotesque. Gillray's interest in monstrous inversions is at work again – the portion of Sin that Milton describes as 'fair', and allures Satan before his fall from grace, Gillray makes hideous, but retains her sexuality. Furthermore, Hill has noted that Gillray's print is a parody of a painting by William Hogarth entitled *Satan, Sin and Death* [fig. 5.11], and later engraved by Rowlandson.⁶²

One important feature of Gillray's parody is that the position of the figures is reversed from Hogarth's original: in *Satan, Sin and Death*, Satan is on the left and the skeletal Death on the right, whereas In *Sin, Death, and the Devil* [fig. 5.9] the opposite is true.⁶³ The change is subtle, and Gillray's parody does not change the content of Hogarth's original, but the mirrored position of the figures does underscore the monstrosity in inversions, or rather, the inversions in monstrosity, and is expressed through the heightened grotesqueness of Sin. In this light, it is possible to see Hill's argument that Gillray's depiction of Queen Charlotte is not necessarily vindictive. Instead

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 139-140.

⁶² Hill, *Fashionable Contrasts*, p. 139.

⁶³ See William Hogarth, *Satan, Sin and Death (A Scene from Paradise Lost)* (circa 1735-1740).

It is logical to assume that Gillray's mind progressed from [...] Milton to politics, and highly unlikely that he began by hunting for an allegory of sin in which to embody the Queen.⁶⁴

Gillray's *Sin, Death, and the Devil* [fig. 5.9], despite depicting an important moment in contemporary politics, is actually more an exercise in form than in political commentary. Gillray uses Pitt and Thurlow's rivalry as a means to parody Hogarth's painting, and takes the opportunity to swap the positions of his figures, which highlights the extra-monstrosity of the central figure, Sin. He inserts a typical bawdiness to the scene with Pitt and Thurlow's phallic spears, encouraging us to laugh both at Pitt's undignified nudity, and at the animosity between Pitt and Thurlow, suggesting their rivalry amounts to a battle over whose spear is longer than the other's. Even this, however, is analogous to monstrous inversion: the position of Sin's covering hand partially mirrors the fig leaves that often cover Adam and Eve's nakedness, but in Gillray's print the hand detracts from, rather than preserves, Pitt's dignity.⁶⁵

Furthermore, although the monster imagery in *Sin, Death, and the Devil* does not explore the spectre of abstraction in the way *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* [fig. 5.1] does, the origin of Gillray's imagery is undoubtedly rooted in abstraction. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton describes Death as

The other shape,
If shape it might be called that shape had none
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb.

⁶⁴ Hill, *Fashionable Contrasts*, p. 140.

⁶⁵ For examples of this depiction of the Edenic couple, see Jan Gossaert, *Adam and Eve* [fig. 5.12] (circa 1520), Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden* [fig. 5.13] (1530) and *Adam and Eve* [fig. 5.14] (1533), and Titian, *Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden* [fig. 5.15] (circa 1550).

Or substance might be called that shadow seemed.⁶⁶

Death, in *Paradise Lost*, is the archetypal monster, an abstract shapeless terror that threatens to fill his victims with ‘strange horror’ and ‘pangs unfelt before’.⁶⁷ In *Sin, Death, and the Devil* [fig. 5.9], Gillray’s primary concern is not with the monstrosity of abstraction, but in being so closely tied to Milton’s text, it sits just beneath the surface, speaking to a wider discourse on the abstract and monsters in literature and art. Moreover, Gillray’s other satirical prints featuring monsters demonstrate that he was aware of this discourse, and of its close relationship with distortions and inversion, which are certainly evident in *Sin, Death, and the Devil*. Even in satires such as this, that are not directly concerned with the abstract, when they use monster imagery they invariably tie themselves to wider concerns around the nature of abstraction.

3.1 Apotheosis: abstraction framed by monstrosity.

For the most part, monster imagery in the period’s satire signifies the presence, or the suspicion of abstraction or formlessness. Eighteenth-century thought was concerned primarily with demarcating the boundaries between the knowable and the fanciful, between reason and abstraction. Even Romantic writers such as Blake who railed against the preference of cold reason over imagination, characterised abstract thought as a ‘spectre’. In fact, what could be labelled ‘abstract’ in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries is difficult to pin down now, and almost impossible at the time, because, like the group of writers we now collectivise as ‘the Romantics’, there was not a set of specific, codifying

⁶⁶ Milton, op. cit., ll. 666-669.

⁶⁷ Ibid., l. 173.

principles. In this sense, the concept of abstraction in the eighteenth century was in itself an abstract concept.

This proved very useful for political satirists, who could label their detractors as guilty of abstraction: as much as the 1790s was a decade of paranoia over the threat of Jacobin insurgency, the period of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries was one in which the fear of the abstract spectre was paramount. *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* [fig. 5.1] summarises the relationship between the fears over abstraction and of British radicalism – it represents Jacobins as obscure monsters who inhabit a Platonic cave of darkness, concocting chimerical concepts from the ashes of revolutionary and seditious literature. At the same time, the satire represents the equally abstract concepts of ‘Truth’ and ‘Justice’ in the forms of angels and cherubim, suggesting that the true monstrosity lies not with the cave-dwelling creature, but in its chiaroscuro relationship with the values of its apparent enemies.

The monstrosity throughout Gillray’s satires is rarely present in his monsters; rather, they underscore the unseen monstrosity in figures such as the eponymous character in *The Apotheosis of Hoche* [fig. 5.2], who remains uncaricatured amongst a horde of monstrous beings. In this and other prints such as *Sin, Death, and the Devil* [fig. 5.9], Gillray demonstrates an interest in inversions – swapping the composition of Hogarth’s painting in the latter, and presenting the French revolutionary general in an ideal light in the former. The ambivalence of Gillray’s politics is an important aspect here. As I discuss in chapter one above, many of his more conservative satires can be attributed to economic rather than political considerations. Furthermore, even in apparently unequivocally conservative satires, with titles such as *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism*, and produced for publications like the *Anti-Jacobin Review*, the

close mirroring of the representations of good and evil reveals an anxiety over abstract thought on either side of the political spectrum: even the simplistic terms ‘good’ and ‘evil’ are brought under scrutiny by presenting a burlesque account of Jacobinism which ultimately reflects a distorted version of Pitt’s government.

The satiric propaganda of the Romantic period, and particularly the last decade of the eighteenth century often depicts a political landscape defined by extremes and unequivocal ideology and doctrine. Of course, in an age of revolution, these were a prominent feature of politics, but the simplistic account of ‘good’ versus ‘evil’ superficially presented in satires like *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* [fig. 5.1] glosses over the coalitions, in-fighting, and political compromise that were also defining features of Romantic-era politics. However, what Gillray achieves in his satires is to ostensibly present a simplistic, pro-Government account of politics, while at the same time slyly comment on the abstraction of thought required to place British radicalism in a box labelled ‘monstrous’. In opening this chapter with an analysis of Wolcot’s *Out at Last!* I have sought to demonstrate that monster imagery is not used exclusively by anti-Jacobin satirists, but that its convenience as a metaphor for abstraction is best suited to satirising Jacobinism and British radicalism. More importantly, analysing Wolcot’s monster imagery highlights important, but often obscure, aspects of Gillray’s prints: Wolcot’s ridiculing of the divide between Pitt’s public and private personas is mirrored in both *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism*, and *A Charm for a Democracy* [fig. 5.8], which present an image of public and private arenas in their Jacobin’s caves, the former presenting the frightening, public perception of Jacobinism while the latter mocks the silliness of the interior of the cave. Moreover, *Out at Last* demonstrates that in a satire at the opposite end of the political spectrum from something like *The Night Mare* [fig. 5.3] or

The Apotheosis of Hoche [fig. 5.2], the concerns are the same – Pitt being splashed with the pelt-pot binds him to the printing process, and he is effectively abstracted out of his body and into the text of his once-loyal periodicals.

Like Gillray, Wolcot is concerned not only with the monstrosity of abstraction, but with its unseen monstrousness, its invisible distortions. In an age of paranoid suspicion, where the dangers of both Jacobin insurgency and government spies were equally formidable spectres, both *Out at Last*, and prints such as *The Apotheosis of Hoche* and *The Life of William Cobbett* [fig. 5.6] distract their audiences with the spectacle of monster imagery, while suggesting that the real monstrosity, the real distorted abstraction, is happening unseen beneath the surface.

‘He toils to give the crude conception vent’:¹
Concluding chapter

By definition, satire is inextricably connected to the context in which it is produced, but more importantly, satire influences that context by providing textual and visual frameworks through which to discuss social, political and historical events. The satire of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries achieves this through a complex set of imagery, and a crucial segment of that imagery is animal metaphors. The bestial metaphors that satirists such as Gifford, Gillray, Shelley and others use not only reflect contemporary political discourses, but also shape those, quite often abstract, discourses by giving them textual and visual form. For example, Gifford’s attack on Wolcot is given a political dimension by portraying him as a toad that threatens to fundamentally corrupt the establishment. Similarly, Robinson’s retaliation in *Modern Manners* against Gifford is politicised partly through her continuation of Gifford’s reptile imagery. The answer to the question of why bestial imagery is so widespread throughout the period’s satire is complex, but the concept at the core of that answer is quite straightforward. Simply, these metaphors are extremely effective, perhaps more so than any other kind of metaphor, at expressing, framing and connecting the political concerns that lie at the heart of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.

And it is the way that animal metaphors are able to connect seemingly disparate political events and debates that makes the imagery of pigs, reptiles and birds so important to the construction of Romantic-era political satire. Just as the poetry of the Della Cruscans and the satires of Gifford are inextricably linked, so too are many of the bestial metaphors that they and other satirists use. One of the

¹ Gifford, *The Baviad*, p. 13, l. 40.

most important animal images, the swinish multitude, is so central to many of the satires that were produced during the period that it inevitably finds connections with other bestial imagery. The most obvious link the swinish multitude has with another bestial metaphor is John Bull, who is depicted in many print satires alongside the swinish multitude. For example, in Gillray's "*More Pigs than Teats*" [fig. 1.2] he finds himself the victim of a rapacious Whig swineherd suckling his prize pig to death and in *The Pigs Possessed* [fig. 1.3] Bull drives another Whiggish swine herd over a cliff-face. The most significant connection that these figures have, however, is in Shelley's *Swellfoot the Tyrant*, in which the swinish multitude are revealed to be a degenerate form of their ancient, Bull-ancestors. In overtly stating that the images of the swinish multitude and John Bull represent essentially the same thing, Shelley exposes John Bull as a form of political propaganda that is just as oppressive as that of the swinish multitude. In fact, when he replaces the iconography of swine with Bulls, and gives his play an ostensibly happy ending with the overthrowing of Swellfoot, Shelley suggests that the image of John Bull is even more insidious than the swine metaphor. This is because it allows the nostalgia for the imagery of a bygone age to distract its subjects, the pigs, from the fact that the John Bull metaphor is just another form of symbolic authority.

Indeed, authority is central to the satires that use reptile and insect metaphors, but also to bird imagery, which is used by satirists such as Dorset to critique the rigid hierarchies in high society. The wide variety of birds allows for a hegemonic social structure in satires such as *The Peacock "At Home"*, and Robinson's *Modern Manners*, implied in the line, 'lordly *Eagles*, - stoop'd to

geese for prey'.² It is no coincidence that in the same poem Robinson uses insect imagery to represent William Gifford and critics like him, who is implicitly very much at the bottom of a hierarchy of flying animals. Although a satire such as *The Peacock "At Home"* is outwardly social, the power structures that it examines are essentially political, mirroring, for example, the social and cultural politics of the Whigs. In addition, Robinson's attack on Gifford, while ostensibly artistic, and contained within a satire on fashionable society, is informed not only by her rejection of the French Revolution, which forms the final part of her poem, but also by her and her fellow Della Cruscans' political enmity with the 'calm assassin', Gifford.³ In contrast, Gifford uses reptile imagery to suggest that the poetry of the Della Cruscans threatens both artistic and political authorities. The reptile imagery in *The Baviad* represents a threat to the established hegemony that is also represented as social hierarchies of birds in *The Peacock "At Home"* and *Modern Manners*.

The 'slimy toad, [that] spits and spues, / The crude abortions of his loathsome muse' that Gifford describes represents a similar threat to the establishment that the monster imagery of Gillray's prints do, but there is a significant difference between reptile and monster metaphors.⁴ In *Epistle to Peter Pindar*, Wolcot, as a 'slimy toad', threatens to destabilise the artistic and political establishment with his 'crude abortions', and indeed, the presence of monsters in Gillray's and Rowlandson's satires also risk the undermining of established authority. However, in *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* [fig. 5.1] and in other prints, the monster suggests a more fundamental danger than the usurpation of

² Mary Robinson, *Modern Manners*, p. 95, l. 138.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 92, l. 6.

⁴ Gifford, *Epistle to Peter Pindar*, p. 82, ll. 125-132.

one form of authority for another, rather, the usurpation of the solid by the abstract. Monster imagery elicits a fear of the destruction of any form of coherent authority in favour of anarchy and chaos. In *The Life of William Cobbett* [fig. 5.6] the devil that lurks behind Cobbett is his mirror image, representing the complete reversal of reason and authority in favour of abstract revolutionary principles. The final plate sees Cobbett engulfed in flames and destruction as physical reality literally breaks down around him, consumed by the flames of monstrous Jacobinical fervour and violence. Where monster imagery differs from all the other forms of satiric bestial metaphors, and the way it fulfils a crucial role as a satiric trope, is in the fact that it has no fixed form in the way that reptiles or pigs do. This aspect of monstrosity is discussed above in chapter five, but it bears repeating that where the swinish multitude provides a contrast to John Bull in its depiction of the British people, monsters in satire provide a relief to the entirety of bestial imagery, and allow satirists to explicitly explore the concept of the abstract in polemical political discourse. Monstrosity's role as a manifestation of abstraction emphasises the connections between other animal metaphors, and more closely binds together that imagery by providing a contrast to the recognisable, fixed images of birds, reptiles, pigs and bulls.

Politics in satires such as *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* [fig. 5.1] and *Presages of the Millenium* [fig. 1.4] are framed as polemical, urgent, and immediate. Even in a Horatian satire like *The Peacock "At Home"*, the use of hegemonic bird imagery and its subsequent examination of power structures fixes the meaning of Dorset's satire securely to a political mast. Likewise, the combination of bull and pig imagery in *Swellfoot the Tyrant* politicises a parody of the Caroline Affair in a way that no other satire on the 1820 scandal achieved. This is because it ties that event to the politically oppressive environment of the

1790s by using that decade's iconography of the swinish multitude. Undoubtedly, the image of the swinish multitude is one of the most important images in the satire of the 1790s, but Shelley's use of it in 1820 ties the thirty-year span of satire together. For satire the year 1820 marked a changing wind in the political climate in Britain. The Reform Act was only twelve years away, and the Catholic Emancipation Act was only nine. In addition, the British slave trade, which was the focus of many pamphlets and satires of the period, was abolished in 1807, before the full abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1833. After 1820 satire experienced a gradual decline, as Dyer has pointed out:

Unquestionably, satire had almost ceased to exist as a distinct genre by the 1830s. After the early 1820s remarkably fewer works that appeared were denominated satires or were intended primarily as such [...] Far fewer satiric poems were written in response to the controversy over Catholic Emancipation and the Reform Bill than at the time of civil unrest in 1817 or George IV's attempt to divorce Queen Caroline in 1820.⁵

As a distinct genre or not, however, satire endured, as did the use of bestial imagery in satire. Indeed, satiric bestial imagery was not a unique phenomenon of the period 1789-1820, but in this period the images accrued distinctive political meanings. The image of the swinish multitude could only have true rhetorical meaning within living memory, of Burke's first use of the phrase and the political context in which it arose. Similarly, John Bull, a figure originating in the early eighteenth century, had specific political meanings in the early 1800s that were not necessarily relevant to his origin as a vehicle of Tory satire, or his later Victorian and twentieth-century incarnations. Similarly, although images such as birds, reptiles and insects are not as historically fixed as, for example, the swinish multitude, the way Gifford and Robinson use them gives those

⁵ Dyer, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

metaphors political meanings that are rooted absolutely in the moment of their publication. It would be very difficult, for example, to read Gifford's depiction of Wolcot as a poisonous toad as anything other than as an attack on the politics that he and other radicals espoused. Monstrosity, a concept that is perhaps even more culturally and historically universal, is identified in this period very specifically with the anti-Jacobin satires of the 1790s and early 1800s, and with a very specific set of political connotations and meanings.

The imagery that this thesis has examined represents just a portion of the full library of the animal metaphors in use throughout the period's satire. The aim of this study is not to provide a complete index of satiric bestial imagery; rather, its intention is to examine a range of the most politically significant animal metaphors and ask why this kind of imagery was so prevalent throughout the satire of the period. This project began with the intention that the political animal imagery it examines would constitute only one chapter within a larger study of body metaphors in satire. However, it quickly became apparent that the topic of animal imagery alone was enough for an entire study, and so richly varied is this topic that this thesis does not propose that the subject has been exhausted. For example, the third chapter above focuses on satires by women writers, but does not discuss the issue of gender in satire beyond the presence of figures such as Robinson and Georgiana Cavendish in fashionable society.

Gender is a topic ripe for further discussion within the context of satiric bestial imagery, and would certainly merit an extended study, particularly as part of the developing critical interest in women writers of the Romantic period.⁶

⁶ For several recent examples, see Stephen C. Behrendt, *British Women Poets and the Romantic Writing Community* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009), Beth Lau (ed.), *Fellow Romantics: Male and Female British Writers, 1790-1835* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), Elizabeth Heckendorn Cook, 'Charlotte Smith and "The Swallow": Migration and Romantic Authorship', in *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, 72:1 (2009), pp. 48-67, and Cook, 'Sam George. Botany,

Additionally, masculinity in animal metaphors did not fit in to the scope of this project, but is another topic that would withstand a sustained analysis. The original scope of this thesis, that of body metaphors, remains largely unaddressed in scholarship.

The images that this thesis has analysed were highly historically and politically potent during the years between 1789 and 1820, but this does not mean they were only used during that period. It is therefore the job of future studies to map the field of satiric bestial imagery both leading up to 1789 and following 1820. In examining the politics of some of the major animal metaphors in satire, this study has opened up a new arena of cultural discourse. A project that offered a more extensive map of the variety of satiric bestial imagery of the Romantic period could only help to widen the field, and provide a fuller and more varied platform for this discussion to continue.

Appendix: Print Satires and Paintings



Fig. 1.1 James Gillray, *Pigs Meat, or – the Swine Flogg'd out of the Farm Yard* (London: H. Humphrey, 22 June 1798).

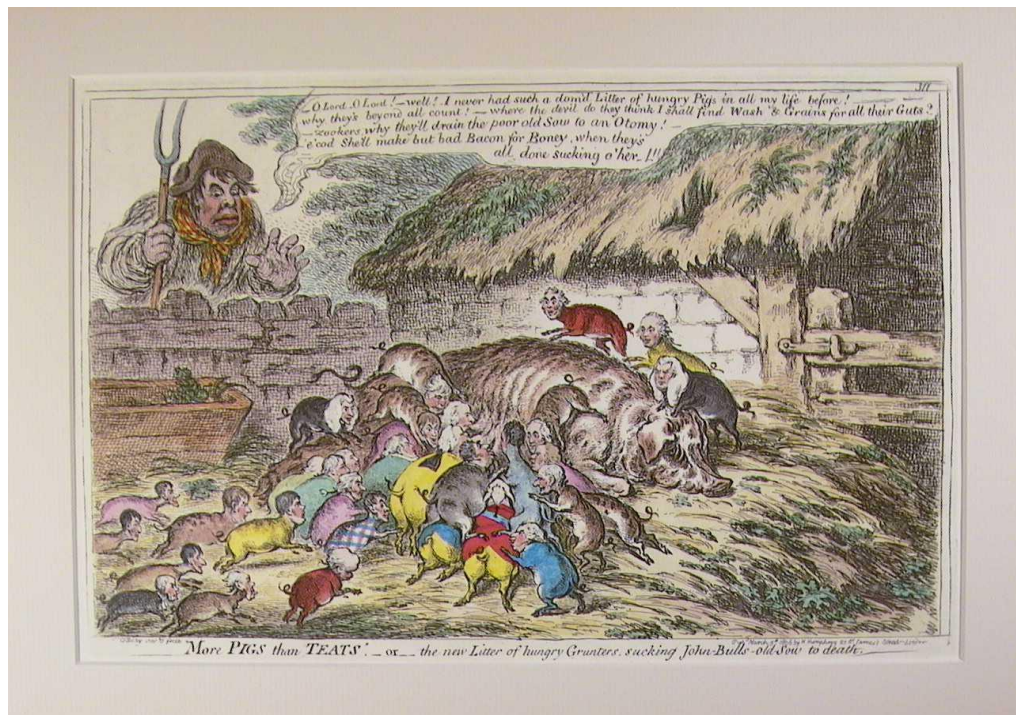


Fig 1.2 Gillray, *More Pigs than Teats*”, - or – the new Litter of hungry Grunters sucking John Bulls-Old Sow to death (London: H. Humphrey, 5 March 1806).



Fig. 1.3 Gillray, *The Pigs Possessed – or the Broad Bottom'd Litter Running Headlong into the Sea of Perdition* (London: H. Humphrey, 18 April 1807).



Fig. 1.4 Gillray, *Presages of The Millenium; - with The Destruction of the Faithful, as Revealed to R. Brothers, The Prophet, & attested by M.B. Hallhead Esq.* (London: H. Humphrey, 4 June 1795).



Fig. 1.5 Gillray, *LIGHT expelling DARKNESS, ___Evaporation of Stygian Exhalations, __or __The SUN of the CONSTITUTION, rising superior to the Clouds of OPPOSITION* (London: H. Humphrey, 30 April 1795).



Fig. 1.6 Gillray, *Smelling out a Rat; or The Atheistical-Revolutionist disturbed in his Midnight "Calculations"* (London: H. Humphrey, 3 December 1790).

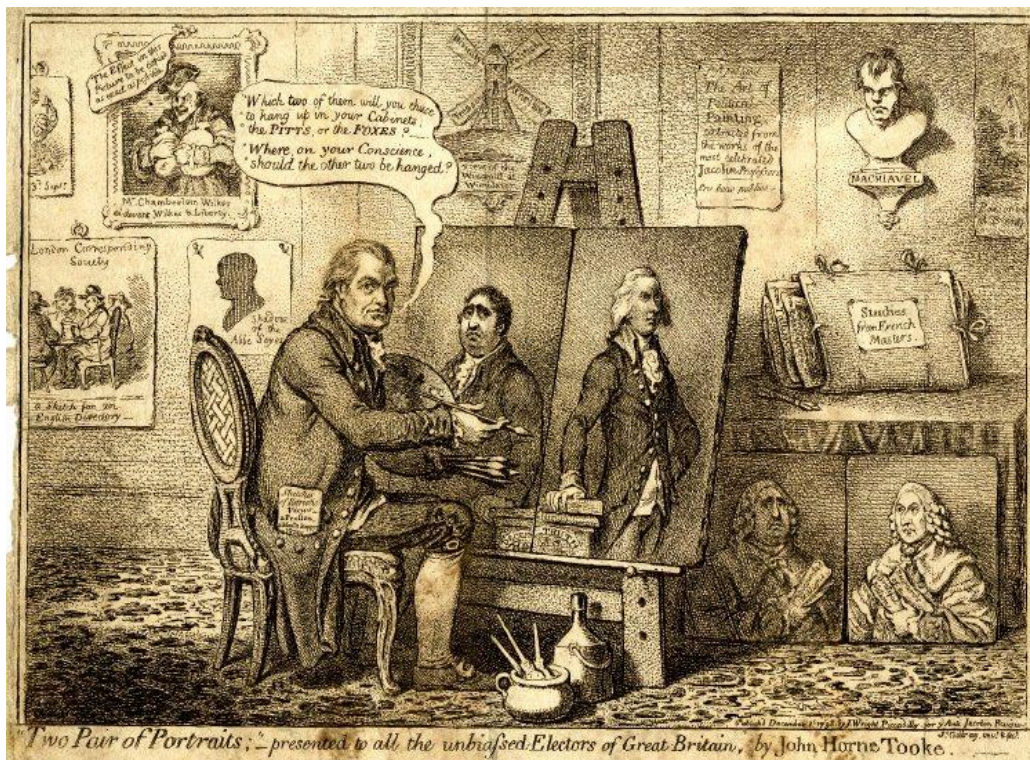


Fig. 1.7 Gillray, *"Two Pair of Portraits,"* – presented to all the unbiased Electors of Great Britain," by John Horne Tooke (London: J. Wright, 1 December 1798).



Fig. 1.8 Gillray, *Substitutes for Bread; - or - Right Honorables, Saving the Loaves & Dividing the Fishes*. (London: H. Humphrey, 24 December 1795).

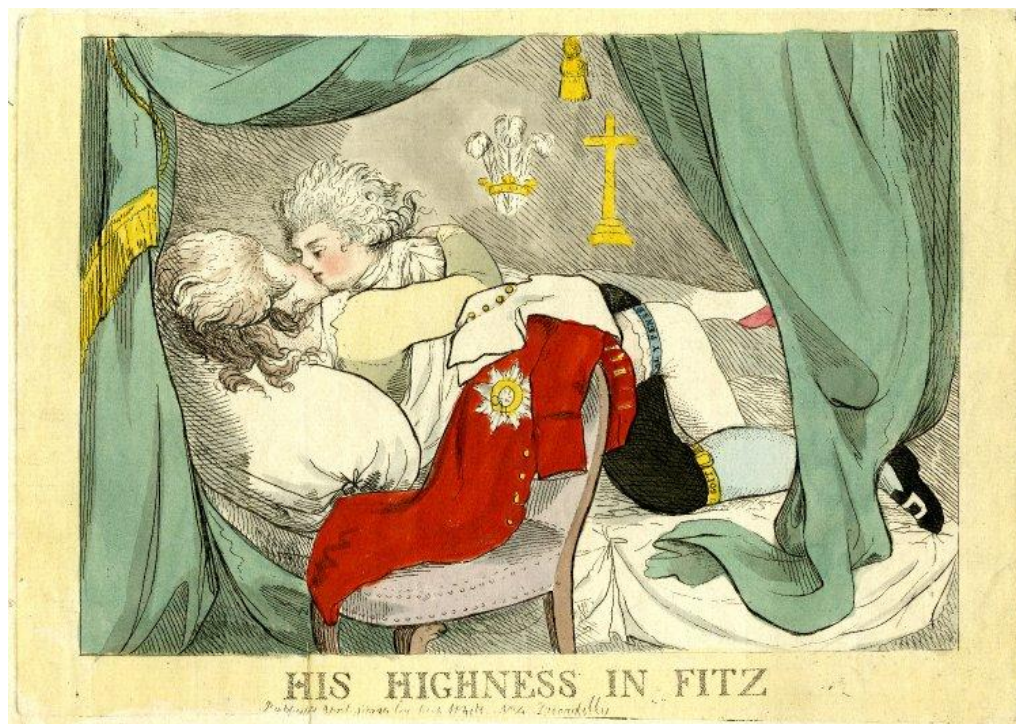


Fig. 1.9 George Townly Stubbs (attributed), *His Highness in Fitz* (London: S.W. Fores, 1 April 1786).



Fig. 1.10 Stubbs (attributed), *Out of Fits, or The Recovery to the Satisfaction of all Parties*, (London: S.W. Fores, 5 May 1786).



Fig. 2.1 Gillray, *John Bull ground down* (London: H. Humphrey, 1 June 1795).

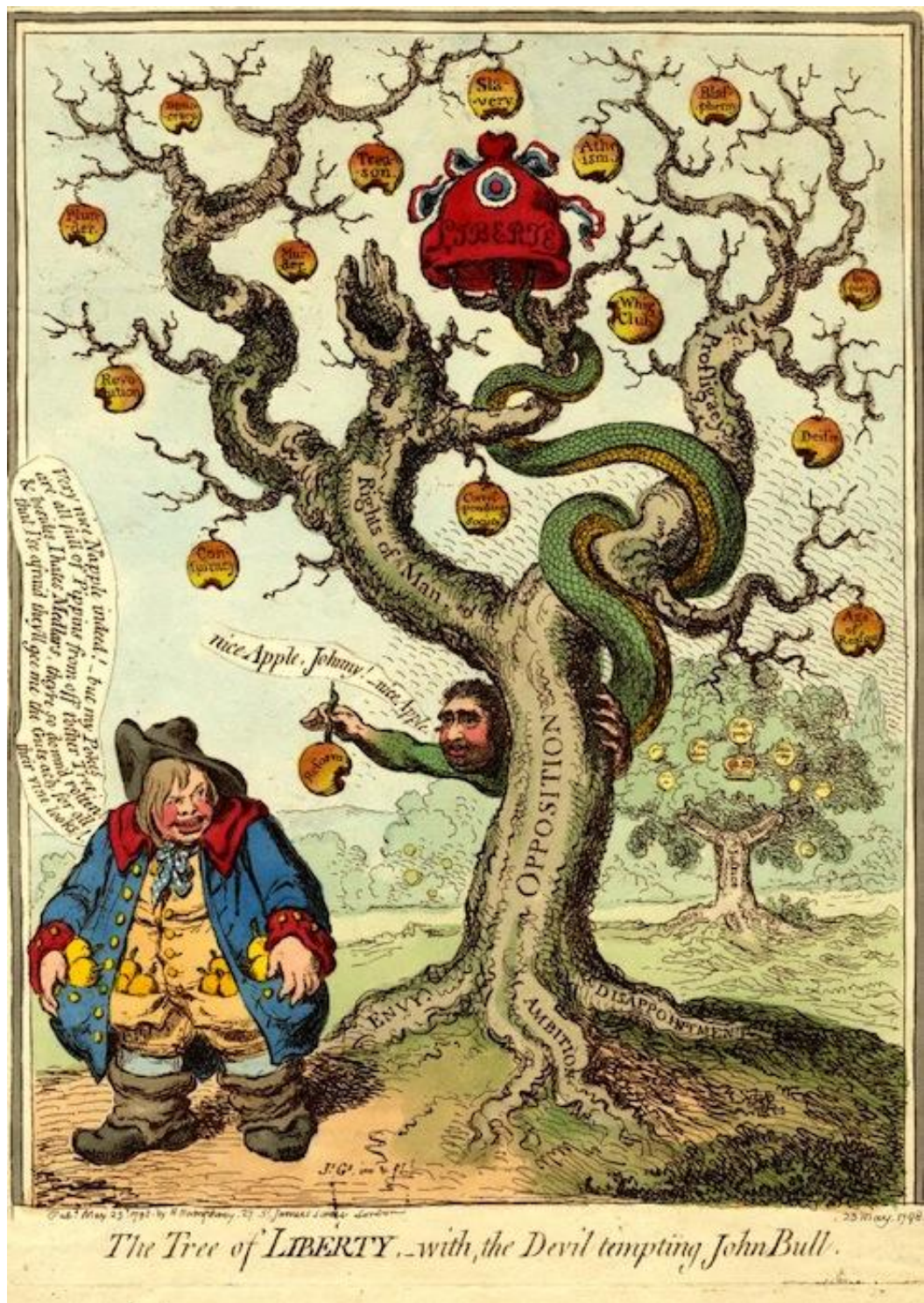


Fig. 2.2 Gillray, *The Tree of Liberty, - with, the Devil tempting John Bull* (London: H. Humphrey, 23 May 1798).



Fig. 2.3 Gillray, *John Bull bother'd; - or - The Geese alarming the Capitol* (London: H. Humphrey, 19 December 1792).

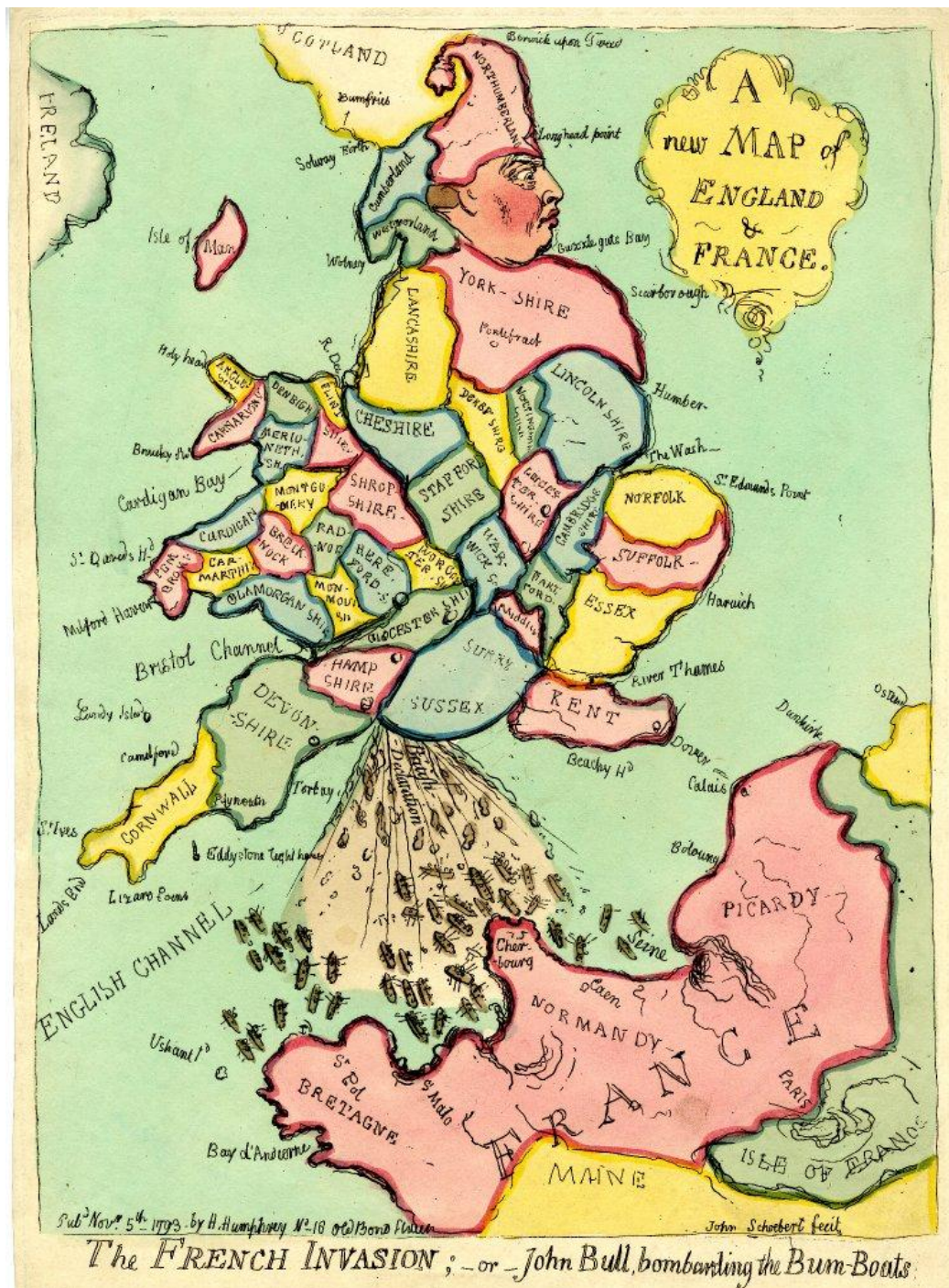


Fig. 2.4 Gillray, *The French Invasion;-or-John Bull, Bombarding the Bum-Boats* (London: H. Humphrey, 5 November 1793).

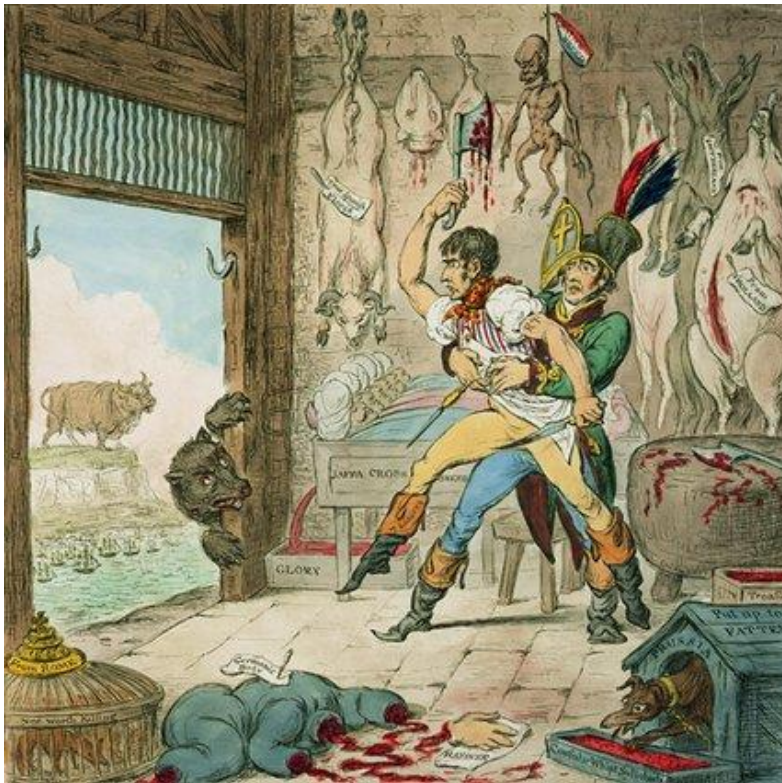


Fig. 2.5 Gillray, *The Corsican Carcase-Butcher's Reckoning Day* (London: H. Humphrey, September 1803).

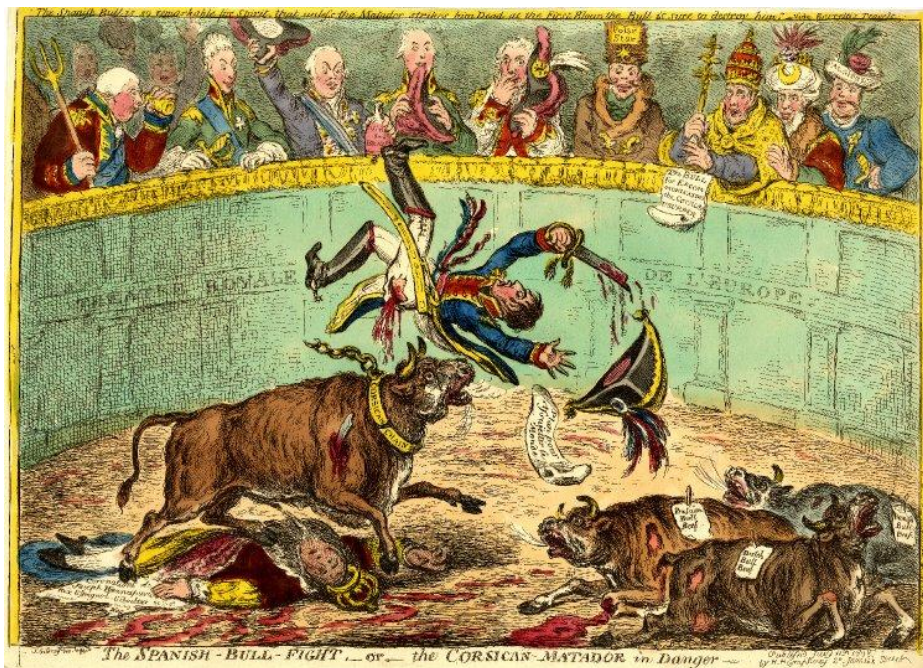


Fig. 2.6 Gillray, *The Spanish – Bull – Fight, or the CORSICAN MATADOR in Danger* (London: H. Humphrey, 11 July 1808).

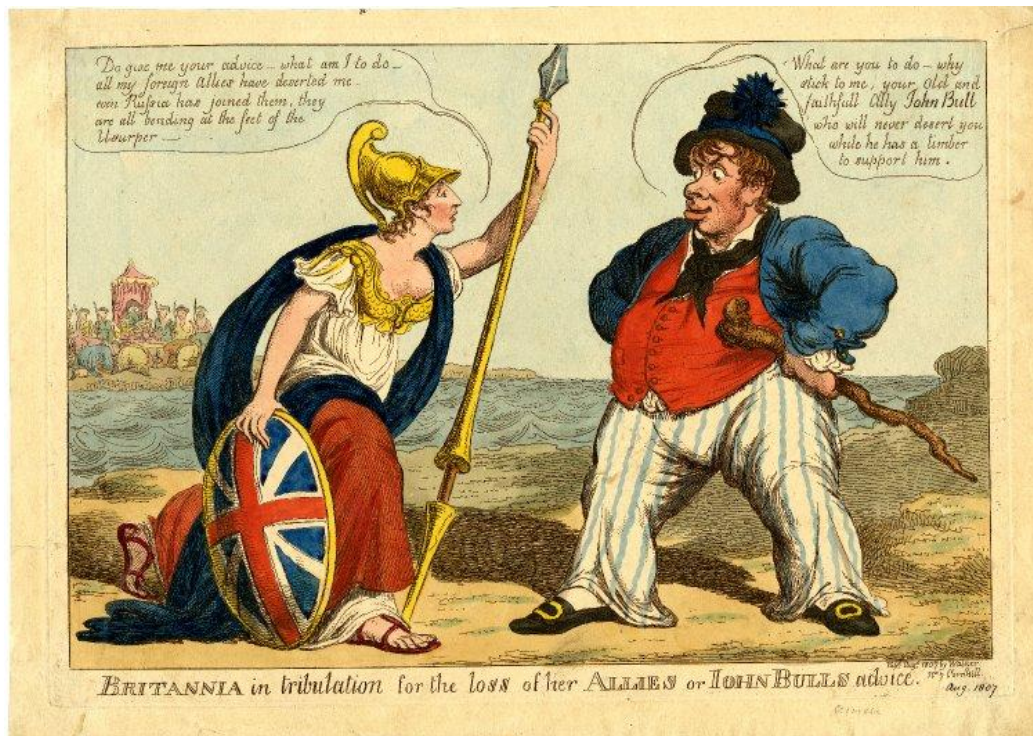


Fig. 2.7 Charles Williams, *Britannia in Tribulation for the Loss of Her Allies, or John Bull's Advice* (London: Elizabeth Walker, August 1807).



Fig. 2.8 Gillray, *JOHN BULL & his Dog Faithful* (London: H. Humphrey, 20 April 1796).



Fig. 2.9 Gillray, *John Bull taking a Luncheon: — or — British Cooks, cramming Old Grumble-Gizzard with Bonne-Chère* (London: H. Humphrey, 24 October 1798).



Fig. 5.1 Gillray, *A Peep into the Cave of Jacobinism* (London: J. Wright, 1 September 1798).



Fig. 5.2 Gillray, *The Apotheosis of Hoche* (London: H. Humphrey, 11 January 1798).

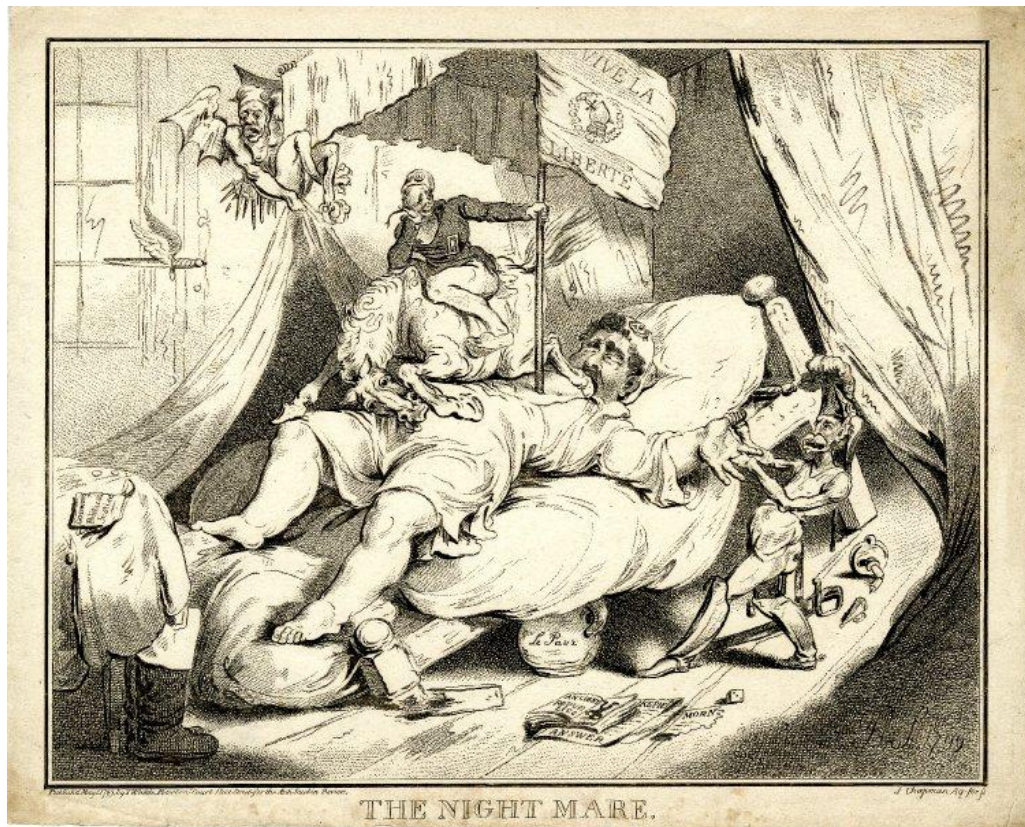


Fig. 5.3 John Chapman, *The Night Mare* (London: J. Whittle, 1 May 1799).

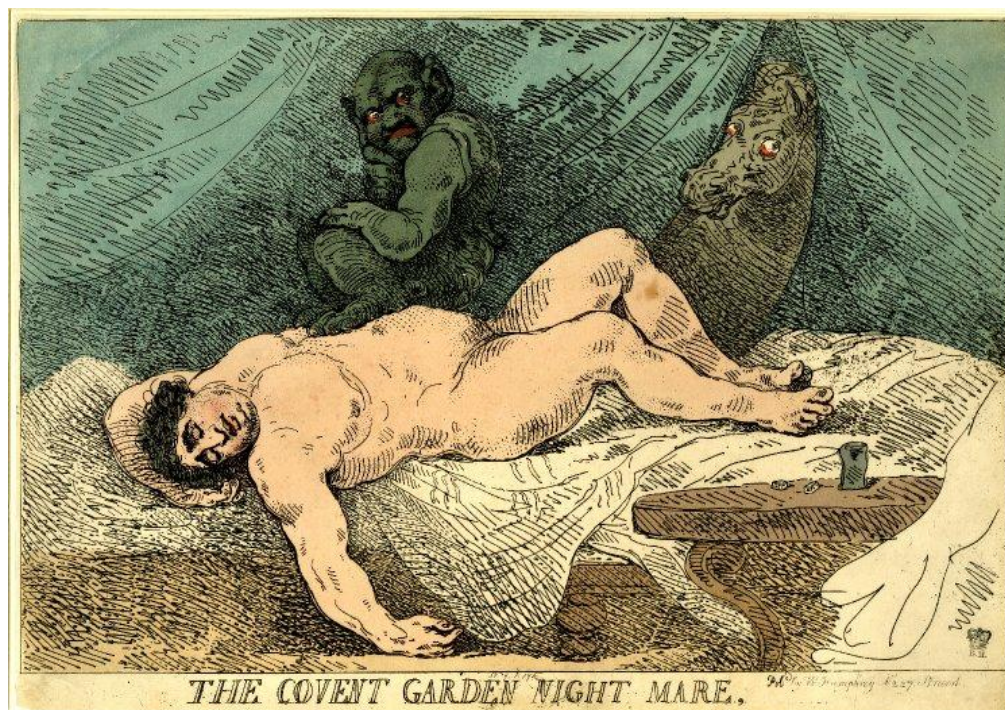


Fig. 5.4 Thomas Rowlandson, *The Covent Garden Night Mare* (London: William Humphrey, 1784).



Fig. 5.5 Henry Fuseli, *The Nightmare* (1781).



Fig. 5.6 Gillray, *The Life of William Cobbett*, - written by himself (London: H. Humphrey, 29 September 1809), plate 1.



J. Gillray inv. & fecit. *The Life of WILLIAM-COBETT. — written by himself.*
 London. Published Sept. 29. 1809. by H. Humphreys, 27 St. James's Street.

2.^d Plate.

— as I shot up into a hobble-dehoy, I took to driving the Plow for the benefit of mankind, which was always my prime object :— hearing that the Church-Wardens were after me, I determined to become a Hero, and secretly quitting my agricultural pursuits, and Sukey Stubbs, — Voluntered as a Private-Soldier, into the 51st Regiment, commanded by that tried Patriot and Martyre Lord Edw.^d Fitzgerald, and embarked for the Plantations. —

Vide my own Memoires.
 in the Political Register for 1809.

Gillray, *The Life of William Cobbett*, plate 2.



J. Gillray del. & fecit. *The Life of WILLIAM-COBETT*. — written by himself.
 London. Published Sept. 22. 1809. By H. Humphreys 27. St. James's Street.

3^d Plate.

arrived in safety (according to the proverb), being a Scholard, (for all the world knows that I can Read and Write.) I was promoted to the rank of a Corporal, and soon after appointed to teach the Officers their duty — found them all so damnably stupid, that though I took the pains to draw up my instructions on Cards, I could not with all my Caning and Kicking, drive one manual movement into their thick heads!

— NB: These Cards were so much admired by Genl. Dundas, that he made them the foundation of his New Military System.

— Vide my own Memoirs in the Political Register of 1809 —

Gillray, *The Life of William Cobbett*, plate 3.



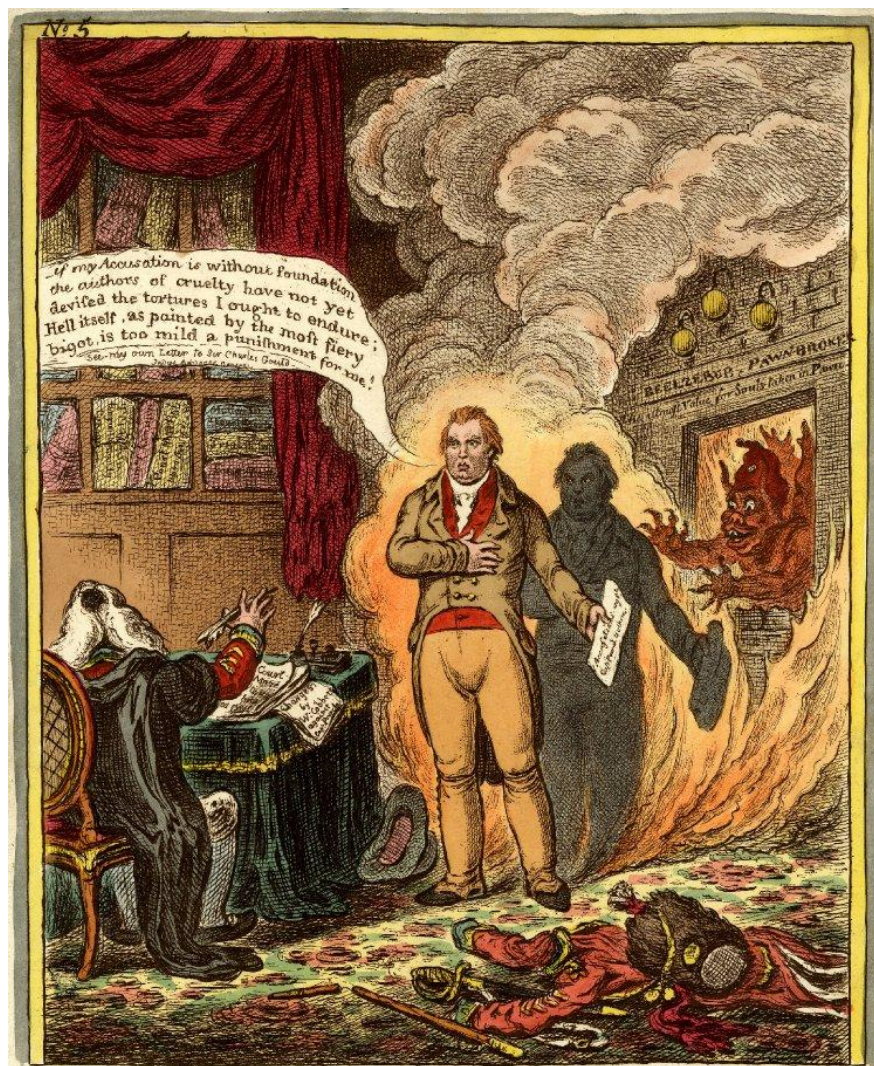
The Life of WILLIAM COBBETT, - written by himself.
 London. Published Sept. 29. 1803. by H. Humphrey 27. St James's Street.

4th Plate.

- I was now made Sarjeant Major and Clerk to the Regiment, and there being only One Man in it, besides myself, who could read, or keep himself sober. (viz. - poor little Corporal Bestland). I constituted him my Deputy; - being intrusted with the care of the Regimental Books, the Corporal and myself (tho' both of us ~~very~~ afraid of a pair of Bloody Shoulders;) - purloined, and Copied by night such Documents as promised to be serviceable in the great National Object which I had in view; - namely, to Disorganize the Army, preparatory to the Revolutionizing it altogether!

Vide. my Own Memoirs
 in the Political Register of 1809.

Gillray, *The Life of William Cobbett*, plate 4.



J. Gillray del. & fecit. **The Life of WILLIAM COBBETT,** written by himself.
London: Published Sept. 29th 1809 by H. Houghton 27 St. James's Street.

5th Plate —

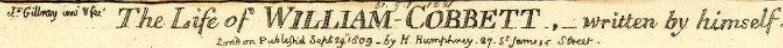
— my next step was to procure a Discharge from my ever lamented associate the Lord Edw.^d Fitzgerald: with this I returned to England, and directly set about writing "the Soldier's Friend" which I nightly dropt about the Horse-Guards; and drank "Damnation to the House of Brunswick!" more-over, I wrote 27 Letters to my Royal Master, to M^r Pitt and the Judge Advocate, against my Officers, 23 of which Letters were stolen by the public Robbers, and never came to hand, so that I had no means of obtaining Credit for my Charges, & procuring a Court-Martial: but — by solemnly Pledging my ~~precious~~ Soul to the Devil in the presence of Judge Gould for the Truth of my allegations, and my ability to support them by evidence!!!

— Vide my own Memoirs
in the Political Register 1809. —

Gillray, *The Life of William Cobbett*, plate 5



Gillray, *The Life of William Cobbett*, plate 6.



I did not look behind me, till I got to S^t Omers; but this being still too near the scene of my detection, I fled to America & there, I offered, to become a Spy for my most gracious - Sovereign, this being scornfully rejected, I contented myself with Plundering & Libelling the Yankees, for which I was fined 5000 dollars, and kicked out of the Country! - Seven years had elapsed since I absconded from England, so I thought that my exploits there, might be forgotten, and ventured to return. - I set up the Crown and Mitre, under cover of which, I abused the Church and State, very comfortably, - my Loyalty being thus established, I accepted from the Doctor (so I always call the Right Hon^{ble} Henry L^d. Visct. Sidmouth) £4000, which was to be expended in printing & dispersing a pamphlet against the "Hell-Fire Yell of Reform!" - with this money I paid my debts, I purchased a pretty bit of Land at Botley, and sat quietly down to enjoy the fruits of my honest industry. A thousand applications have been made to me, to refund or account for some part of this enormous Sum, but, ~~Blasphemous~~! I will see the Doctor ~~harassed~~, and all such Pools as the Doctor, before I open my mouth on the Subject. - At Botley my natural bent returned, but upon a larger scale, for being now Lord of the Manor of Botley, & in the receipt of Five Thousand pounds a year from the sale of my Weekly Register, therefore not caring a single God-damn for Public Opinion, I reacted the peccadilloes of my youth, & with maturer mischief, began by sowing dissensions thro' the whole County, I kicked the Sick & the Infirm Labourer into the Street, I oppress'd the poor, I sent the Aged ~~to the~~ ~~care of~~ ~~the~~ ~~Hands~~ of my Parish Apprentices before they were opened in a morning, and being nobly supported by a loyal band of Reformers, I renewed in our Orgies, my old favourite Toast of "Damnation to the House of Brunswick" - thus, exalted in glory & popularity I found myself on the point of becoming the greatest Man in the World, except that Idol of my thoughts, that object of my Adorations, his Royal & Imperial Majesty NAPOLEON. -

Vide my own Memoirs in the Political Register - 1800



J. Gillray inv. & fecit. *The Life of WILLIAM-COBETT, written by himself.*
 London: Published by H. Humphreys, Sept. 15, 1809. - N. 27, St. James's Street.

Plate 8th.

— but alas, in the midst of my towering prospects, while I was yet hesitating between a Radical Reform and a Revolution, & doubtful whether to assume the Character of Old Noll or Jack Cade, — down came my Political Register, & the fabric of my visionary greatness vanished. my Schemes for my Country's good perished by the blaze of my own Candles! — The Ghost! — slid? — Lord forgive me for swearing! — the Ghost of Capt. Powell uttered a scream of Joy. Little Jeby's brandy-faced Mother — Lord pardon me! — called out for Justice! — the Bats and Harpies of Revolution hid their heads in the gloom of night, — and to complete the horrible scene, the rigid Pauncher ~~of the~~ Old Beetrebub, entered and demanded his property, the Fortlet Soul, which I had pledged! — Lord have mercy upon me! — Our Father! — to the Truth of my accusation's! — oh! oh! — oh! — ~~Flames~~ Flames.

— Vide, My own Memoirs in the Political Register. 1809.

Gillray, *The Life of William Cobbett*, plate 8.



Fig. 5.11 William Hogarth, *Satan, Sin and Death (A Scene from Paradise Lost)* (circa 1735-1740).



Fig. 5.12 Jan Gossaert, *Adam and Eve* (circa 1520).



Fig. 5.13 Cranach the Elder, Lucas, *Adam and Eve in The Garden of Eden* (1530).



Fig. 5.14 Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Adam and Eve* (1533).



Fig. 5.15 Titian, *Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden* (circa 1550).

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When citing material in the collection, references to the volumes will be abbreviated to *BS* and the volume number. Full bibliographic references for the individual volumes, and for the complete collection, can be found in the primary sources under the individual editors' names.

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